**Omission of disabled people from key parts of climate change text is ‘beyond disgraceful’**

Disabled climate activists say the failure of the UK and other governments to include disabled people in key parts of the Glasgow climate change agreement is “beyond disgraceful”.

Despite campaigners repeatedly highlighting through the COP26 conference how climate change was having a disproportionate impact on disabled people across the planet, [the final text](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3_auv_2_cover%20decision.pdf) (PDF) of the United Nations agreement mentions disabled people only once.

The repeated omissions from key areas of the text appear to breach the UN’s own Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), [which makes it clear](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) in article four that governments should “closely consult with” and “actively involve” disabled people through their own organisations when making decisions on issues affecting them.

Two weeks ago, three disabled campaigners [told an event at the Glasgow conference](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/urgent-action-needed-to-ensure-disabled-people-are-not-neglected-in-climate-battle/) that disabled people and their organisations had to be at the heart of policy discussions around climate change, partly because they were disproportionately affected by its impact.

The omission of disabled people from key sections of the final text came after the UK government admitted last week that there had been [widespread and serious access failings](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/uk-government-admits-widespread-disability-access-failures-at-cop26/) at the conference in Glasgow.

The final text from the conference was published at the weekend, and has been [widely criticised by climate activists](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-59296859) for failing to agree strong enough action to limit global warming to 1.5C.

But it also ignores repeated calls for disabled people to play a key role in the development of climate change policy.

The text’s single reference to disabled people is in the introduction to the agreement – the preamble – and mentions them only in passing.

It then goes on to stress the “important role” of indigenous peoples and groups including “youth and children” in responding to climate change, but it omits disabled people.

It also acknowledges the “important role of a broad range of stakeholders” in “averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change”, but again fails to mention disabled people.

Most worryingly, in the final section, on “collaboration”, the agreement makes a series of references to the importance of involving other groups in addressing the climate disaster.

It recognises the “important role” of indigenous peoples, local communities, young people and children, but not disabled people.

It calls on governments to respect their obligations on “gender equality and empowerment of women”, but it fails to mention disability equality.

It also urges governments to ensure “meaningful youth participation and representation” in decision-making processes, but it fails to call for them to ensure disabled people are also involved.

And it calls on governments to “actively involve indigenous peoples and local communities in designing and implementing climate action”, and to increase the participation of women in climate action and ensure “gender-responsive implementation”, but it omits any similar mention of disabled people.

[Dzaier Neil](https://twitter.com/dzaierneil), convenor of the Green Party’s disability group, said the exclusion from key parts of the final text sent a “disturbing message” to disabled people.

She said: “It is beyond disgraceful that COP26 makes scant reference to those with disabilities and no commitment whatsoever to collaboration with them.”

She said that 15 per cent of the world’s population are disabled, which was “1.2 billion people who are disproportionately affected by climate change and are likely to lack the economic stability to cope with its impact.

“It is a glaring omission in the context of the references to engagement and collaboration with other groups and seems at odds with the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“The governments of the world need to pay more than lip service to this and offer the involvement and consultation that the convention requires.”

Disabled climate activist [Pauline Castres](https://twitter.com/PaulineCastres) said it was a repeat of the Paris agreement of six years ago, with a brief mention in the preamble and “no clear commitments from governments to engage with disabled people, especially with DDPOs\* and not just disability charities”.

She said: “It contrasts with specific action plans previously agreed and implemented on gender and to support the inclusion of indigenous peoples.

“Disability remains an optional aspect of climate plans despite the disproportionate effect extreme climate events have on disabled people.”

[Susie Fitton](https://twitter.com/SusieFitton), [Inclusion Scotland’s](https://inclusionscotland.org/) policy manager, said the final text was “very disappointing in relation to active involvement and participation of disabled people in climate action”.

She highlighted several CRPD articles that make it clear that disabled people’s human rights should be protected in response to climate change, [including article 11](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-11-situations-of-risk-and-humanitarian-emergencies.html), which calls for “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of disabled people in situations of risk”, and [article 32](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-32-international-cooperation.html), which obliges governments to “ensure that international cooperation… is inclusive of and accessible to” disabled people.

Fitton said: “There is a brief mention of disabled people in the preamble but whilst the important role of indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society, women, youth and children has been rightly and explicitly recognised in addressing and responding to climate change, disabled people… who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, have been overlooked in the text and are not included as key stakeholders.

“This must change.”

She said Inclusion Scotland was calling on the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](https://unfccc.int/) “to recognise disabled people and their representative organisations as a constituency in the international response to climate change”.

She said: “Disabled people must be viewed as key stakeholders in the development of international and domestic climate policy with meaningful participation in climate action, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all climate-related policies, initiatives and finance.

“There can be no climate justice without the active involvement of disabled people, it’s as simple as that.”

The UK government, which hosted COP26, failed to comment by noon today (Thursday) on the omission of disabled people from the key parts of the final text, and the apparent breach of CRPD.

The UN’s own committee on the rights of persons with disabilities had also failed to comment by noon today.

The committee has also failed so far to comment on the COP26 access failures, despite being first approached on 8 November.

*\*Deaf and disabled people’s organisations*

**18 November 2021**

**Universal credit uplift failure was ‘unfair, unjustified and discriminatory’, court hears**

The government’s decision to treat claimants of universal credit more favourably throughout the pandemic than those receiving other benefits – including more than a million disabled people – was unfair, unjustified and discriminatory, the high court has been told.

Four benefit claimants are taking a judicial review case against work and pensions secretary Therese Coffey over her decision at the start of the pandemic to hand a £20-a-week increase to recipients of universal credit and working tax credit, but not to those on other means-tested benefits.

Their lawyers are arguing that by not extending the “uplift” to those on so-called legacy benefits – such as employment and support allowance (ESA) and jobseeker’s allowance (JSA) – Coffey had signalled a “radical and unprecedented departure” from decades of social security policy.

They argue that Coffey’s actions were discriminatory under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Disabled people and allies were outside the high court in London yesterday (Wednesday) morning on the first of two days of legal argument to show their support for the claimants, with the second day of the case due to take place tomorrow.

One of the disabled claimants taking the case, Philip Wayland, from Essex, said this week that he had decided to act on the “injustice” after 10 years of being “treated terribly” by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), particularly through the work capability assessment system.

He said that the failure to receive the £20-a-week uplift would have caused him significant financial problems if he had not been living with his mother.

Even so, their electricity bills have risen from £49 a month at the start of the pandemic to £89 a month, and now they have been told to find £124 a month.

He said the actions of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had left him feeling that those people like him who cannot work were being “completely erased from society”.

He said: “It’s like we don’t even exist. I just think it’s disgusting.

“It’s that feeling of erasing a minority group – sick and disabled people – from any help, from the public consciousness, and feeling like we don’t matter and don’t exist.

“That’s how it made me feel.

“It was an obvious case of discrimination that I didn’t feel should be left to stand.”

Among those at yesterday’s demonstration were disabled campaigners from [Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)](https://dpac.uk.net/) and [Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/), who have supported the case and campaigned for the uplift to be extended to those on legacy benefits.

Charities such as [Z2K](https://z2k.org/) – which has played a key role in bringing the case – and opposition MPs including Labour’s former shadow chancellor John McDonnell, disabled Labour MP Marsha de Cordova, Labour’s Debbie Abrahams, Liberal Democrat Wendy Chamberlain, and the SNP’s Marion Fellows and David Linden, also attended the demonstration.

In March, as part of its #20More4All campaign, [DPAC delivered mail bags full of the testimonies](https://dpac.uk.net/2021/03/20more4all-testimonies-stats-facts/) of disabled people to DWP, the Treasury and 10 Downing Street, describing the financial struggles they had faced during the pandemic.

Ellen Clifford, a member of DPAC’s national steering group, who was at the demonstration, said Coffey’s failure to extend the uplift had come at the same time that disabled people had been in “desperate fear for their lives”, with about three-fifths of COVID-related deaths being of disabled people and many of those on legacy benefits left isolated and shielding for more than a year.

She said: “In the sixth richest country in the world no-one should be left too poor to bathe, too poor to do their laundry, too poor to eat and to heat.

“This is one injustice that could be put right so easily and at relatively little expense to the Treasury by providing a back-payment to those who lost out.

“It’s a terrible indictment that the attainment of justice once again rests on the backs of a few individual disabled people courageous enough to challenge the government in the high court.”

The £20 uplift came into force on 30 March 2020 and applied to the standard allowance of universal credit and the basic amount of working tax credit, but there was no equivalent uplift to the personal allowance of legacy benefit claimants.

This meant the standard allowance was significantly higher than the personal allowance for the first time, a move that the claimants’ lawyers said had “profoundly undermined the coherence of the UK social security scheme”.

The universal credit uplift was only removed by the government last month.

The claimants’ legal team has told the court that Coffey’s refusal to extend the uplift to those on legacy benefits had been achieved with “almost no democratic scrutiny” by parliament, and “limited analysis of the consequences”.

They say this meant that hundreds of thousands of disabled people, who were already disproportionately affected by poverty, have had to survive on “historically low rates” of benefits during a pandemic that has seen a significant rise in their cost of living.

They have produced evidence to show the court that deprivation caused by the pandemic has “disproportionately” affected disabled people.

It is believed that about 1.4 million disabled people on income-related ESA missed out on the uplift at the start of the pandemic, as well as hundreds of thousands more claimants who were receiving JSA and income support, many of them also disabled people.

Coffey argued last year that the difference in treatment between universal credit and legacy claimants was because of DWP technical problems, but DWP has told the court that the explanation is that new universal credit claimants faced greater financial disruption as a result of the pandemic, even though the uplift was not targeted at new claimants.

The claimants’ legal team, which includes solicitors from [Osbornes Law](https://osborneslaw.com/), has told the court that there is no evidence that explains why new claimants might need more generous benefits than existing claimants, and it was therefore “manifestly unfair” to treat them differently.

They argued: “This straightforward failure to treat like cases alike is profoundly unfair, arbitrary and unjustified.”

DWP declined to share details of its legal defence with DNS, but a spokesperson said in a statement: “We do not comment on live court cases.

“It has always been the case that those on legacy benefits who think they may be better off on universal credit can make a claim.”

**18 November 2021**

**Concern and surprise over survey that showed care users do not want staff vaccinated**

The government has refused to investigate whether a consultation on care worker vaccinations was hijacked by anti-vaccine activists, after its findings suggested that two-thirds of disabled and older people would prefer that their care workers were not protected against COVID-19.

The results show that 68 per cent of people who claimed they were current service-users – or their relatives or friends – said they felt strongly or would prefer that those providing their care were not vaccinated against COVID-19.

More than 1,100 of those respondents who claimed to be a service-user or a relative or friend of a service-user – 58 per cent of this group – said they felt strongly that the care worker should not be vaccinated.

The results also show that only 28 per cent of this group said they felt strongly that the care workers providing their care should be vaccinated against coronavirus.

Overall, less than three in 10 respondents (29 per cent) to the consultation were supportive of the government’s plans for compulsory COVID-19 vaccination for staff in social care settings.

The consultation results were included in the Department of Health and Social Care’s response to the consultation, [which was published last week](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-vaccination-a-condition-of-deployment-in-the-health-and-wider-social-care-sector).

The government has already made it mandatory – with limited exceptions – for care home staff in England to be vaccinated, a measure that came into force on 11 November.

But the consultation asked for views about extending these rules to those in the NHS and to all social care services regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in England – again, with limited exceptions – including many thousands of care workers providing support in people’s homes.

Health and social care secretary Sajid Javid [said last week](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/health-secretary-statement-on-vaccines-as-a-condition-of-deployment) that he would ignore the results of the consultation and had instead concluded that all those working in the NHS and (CQC regulated) social care will have to be vaccinated, a measure that will come into force on 1 April 2022.

Disabled activist Dennis Queen, herself an employer of personal assistants (PAs), said she was “extremely surprised” by the survey’s outcome.

She said: “Most people I have discussed this with who use social care are vaccinated themselves and would prefer their care staff, support workers, or personal assistants to be vaccinated against COVID, as well.”

She pointed out that direct employers of PAs will not be affected by the new rules, so it will remain their own responsibility to navigate the vaccination issue within equality and employment law and advice from their insurers.

She said: “Thousands of disabled people – including many people with learning difficulties and elders – have died from COVID since March 2020, due to care staff bringing infections to work in large institutions. Nobody consulted with those disabled people.”

She added: “I’m worried about the consequences of this research, and we should scrutinize the process.”

Fazilet Hadi, head of policy for [Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/), said the proportion of service-users and their friends and family who did not want their care worker to be vaccinated “sounds far too high”.

She said: “Disability Rights UK supports government plans to make COVID vaccinations compulsory for all health and care workers, unless there is a medical exemption.

“We believe that all reasonable safeguards need to be put in place, to ensure that disabled people receiving care are protected from COVID.”

Svetlana Kotova, director of campaigns and justice at [Inclusion London](https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/), said: “We know from experience disabled people who need social care support want to be safe from COVID.

“Vaccines are a good way to achieve this.

“However, we believe the government needs to be mindful when introducing compulsory vaccinations since there are huge staff shortages in the sector.”

Javid said last week that data shows how vaccinations have kept people safe and have saved lives, which was “especially true for vulnerable people in health and care settings”.

He added: “And I’m mindful, not only of our need to protect human life, but our imperative to protect the NHS and those services upon which we all rely.”

DHSC refused to say this week if it was concerned that members of the anti-vaccine movement could have hijacked the consultation, and whether it would investigate the possibility.

But a DHSC spokesperson said: “As the health and social care secretary said, NHS and care staff do amazing work and we are thankful to those who have chosen to get the vaccine.

“It is our responsibility to do everything we can to protect vulnerable people.

“In addition to the 34,900 responses to the consultation, we also held roundtable events with royal colleges, representative bodies, and unions, to ensure a diverse range of opinion was represented through the process.

“We have carefully considered the responses received, and set out our formal consultation response.”

**18 November 2021**

**Council backs chief executive who lied to tribunal over discrimination evidence**

A council whose chief executive told a senior colleague with ADHD\* that her brain “doesn’t work like other people’s” has been found guilty by a tribunal of disability discrimination and harassment.

An employment tribunal heard how council boss Kim Smith also told Rachael Wright-Turner that she had not realised she was “being serious” when she had previously disclosed that she had ADHD.

And she questioned whether Wright-Turner had disclosed her ADHD during the recruitment process for the role of director of public services reform at Hammersmith and Fulham council, and asked her why she had not been told that she had ADHD.

The tribunal concluded that Wright-Turner would have found all three of these comments by Smith at a meeting on 2 May 2018 to be “humiliating and offensive”.

The tribunal heard how Wright-Turner had informed the council’s occupational health unit – when she took on the newly-created post in November 2017 – that she had been diagnosed with ADHD the previous year.

She also disclosed that she had been diagnosed with PTSD, due to her work with her previous employer, Kensington and Chelsea council, dealing with the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire.

The tribunal heard how Wright-Turner had been “under-resourced” in her role at Hammersmith and Fulham, in which she had to set up a new department from scratch while working with “limited and potentially unsustainable” funding, and that she had worked “increasingly excessive hours”.

Following the meeting with Smith on 2 May 2018, a month after the new department had become operational, Wright-Turner had joined colleagues in a nearby bar.

She began to experience significant mental distress following a conversation with another council director, Mark Grimley, which triggered a Grenfell-related flashback.

This led to her being taken to a local accident and emergency unit, and then being seen by a mental health crisis intervention team, before taking a period of sickness absence due to reaching a point of “total breakdown”.

Wright-Turner was dismissed from her job in August 2018 while she was still on sick leave, without being warned first that she was at risk of losing her job.

She had earlier had her probationary period for the job extended by three months while she was on sick leave.

The employment tribunal found that she would have been confirmed in the role if it had not been for the period of disability-related absence.

And it said the council had deliberately omitted any reference to her sickness absence or her impairments “to avoid any inference that this decision was in any way connected with the claimant’s mental health or related sickness absence”.

The tribunal upheld complaints of disability discrimination and harassment, and it concluded that Wright-Turner had been unfairly dismissed.

In a scathing judgement delivered by the three-person panel, the tribunal said that both Smith and Grimley, the council’s former director of corporate services, had given evidence on “key factual issues” that they both knew to be untrue.

The tribunal, which had considered more than 4,700 pages of written evidence, found them both to be “unreliable” witnesses.

Wright-Turner said after the judgement was released that the last three years had been “a living nightmare”.

She said: “I am relieved with the judgment and that the truth can now begin to be more widely understood.

“Whilst the implications of the tribunal’s conclusion are devastating, it is fair and they deserve every word of it.”

Karen Murray, from solicitors Slater and Gordon, who represented Wright-Turner, described the tribunal’s judgement as “lengthy and scathing” about the council “and deservedly so”.

She said: “A local government department cannot expect to get away with treating its employees in such a way.”

Grimley is no longer with the council, but Smith remains its chief executive.

The council refused this week to say if Smith was considering her position as a result of being found to have lied to the tribunal.

And it refused to say if it would be taking any disciplinary action against its chief executive.

But a council spokesperson said: “We are disappointed and fundamentally disagree with the tribunal’s judgement. We are studying it carefully and considering our options.

“As we consider this verdict, we restate our continuing commitment to fight discrimination, including disability, race and gender discrimination in all their forms.

“We have a strong record on disability, having set up the first [Disabled People’s Commission](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/ground-breaking-co-production-report-creates-blueprint-for-national-change/) of its kind in the country.

“The commission, which was independent and entirely made up of disabled people, delivered a radical agenda on accessibility and inclusivity for disabled residents.

“Working to co-produce and co-design services with disabled people is at the heart of everything we do.”

*\**[*Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/)

**18 November 2021**

**DWP assessment contracts will see another £2 billion handed to outsourcing giants**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is set to hand profit-making organisations another £2 billion to assess disabled people for their benefits over just five years, government documents have revealed.

The new details are contained in [a contract notice](https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/028407-2021?origin=SearchResults&p=1) published by DWP last Friday, which provides fresh information about DWP’s plans for its assessment system over the five years from 2023.

Outsourcing companies will soon be submitting bids to win five regional contracts covering Great Britain and Northern Ireland, although one of those contracts will be managed by Northern Ireland’s Department for Communities.

The other contracts will be split into northern England and Scotland; the Midlands and Wales; south-west England; and London, south-east England and East Anglia.

The successful supplier in each region will be expected to carry out both personal independence payment (PIP) assessments and work capability assessments (WCAs), although in Scotland PIP will be replaced by the new adult disability payment, which will be run by the Scottish government.

As reported by Disability News Service (DNS) [two months ago](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/prospect-of-atos-fitness-for-work-contract-return-horrifies-activists/), DWP’s decision to commission a single supplier to provide all assessments in each part of the country means the discredited government contractor Atos could soon be carrying out “fitness for work” tests again.

Six years ago, Atos withdrew from its WCA contract following years of negative publicity and multiple links between the actions of the company and its staff and the deaths of disabled claimants.

Information released to DNS last year showed that, between April 2010 and April 2019, DWP paid its three PIP and WCA contractors – Atos, Capita and Maximus – nearly £2.3 billion over nine years, although significant sums were not spent on PIP assessments until 2014-15.

Atos, Maximus and Capita have all faced significant and repeated criticism over their performance through the last decade.

In 2018-19, the government paid the three contractors about £400 million.

The new contract notice shows that the new northern England and Scotland contract will be worth £648 million over five years; the Midlands and Wales contract will be worth about £475 million; the south-west England contract £340 million; the London, south-east England and East Anglia contract will be worth about £400 million; and the successful bidder for the Northern Ireland contract will be paid about £105 million.

These figures suggest that spending on assessments will not rise significantly and may even fall slightly in real terms.

This could be because of a greater use of virtual rather than face-to-face assessments, and an increasing proportion of assessments carried out only on the paperwork.

The government’s Shaping Future Support green paper [suggested in July](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/ministers-could-merge-disability-benefits-and-want-to-cut-future-spending-says-green-paper/) that DWP wanted to make greater use of “triaging”, making early decisions on more “straightforward” claims so claimants only have to go through face-to-face assessments “if absolutely necessary”.

It also said that it would test a simplified application process for those disabled people who are not terminally ill, but who have “severe and lifelong conditions that will not improve”, are “unlikely ever to work again”, and will “always need extra financial support to live independently”.

Both these moves could potentially cut the amount DWP will need to spend on the assessment process.

But the green paper also strongly hinted at the need to cut spending on disability benefits so that the system was “more affordable in the future”.

And work and pensions secretary Therese Coffey [admitted to DNS at her party’s annual conference](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/conservative-conference-coffey-says-merging-pip-with-universal-credit-is-on-the-table/) last month that merging PIP with universal credit as a further cost-cutting measure was also “on the table”.

Meanwhile, the new minister for disabled people, Chloe Smith, has provided further details about a pilot programme that is testing how to bring the services that deliver the WCA and PIP assessments into a new, single digital service, presumably in time for the start of the new contracts in 2023.

The assessments in the pilot area are being carried out by healthcare professionals employed by the Australian multinational outsourcing giant [Advanced Personnel Management](https://apm.net.au/about-apm), whose founder Megan Wynne was described only last week as Australia’s newest billionaire after her company was floated on the Australian stock exchange.

Smith [told her shadow](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-28/65469), Labour’s Vicky Foxcroft, that the pilot was being carried out in a small area of north London, and currently involved 71 employment and support allowance claimants, 810 universal credit claimants and 1,422 PIP claimants.

DWP told DNS yesterday (Wednesday) that the claimants live in the E5, N2, N3, N4 and N6 postcode areas, which cover two areas of north and north-east London.

**18 November 2021**

**Lizzie Emeh: ‘Remarkable legacy’ left by pioneering disabled artist**

Fellow disabled artists and colleagues have spoken this week of the “remarkable legacy” left by the pioneering singer-songwriter Lizzie Emeh, who has died at the age of 44.

In 2009, Emeh became the first person with a learning difficulty to release an album of original songs in the UK, when she launched Loud and Proud.

She had joined [Heart n Soul](http://www.heartnsoul.co.uk) in 1999 after being spotted at one of its Beautiful Octopus Club nights, and the arts organisation would support her career over the next 20 years.

Heart n Soul said Emeh had left behind “an incredible body of work and a remarkable legacy”.

Highlights of her career included performing with Beverley Knight at the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

Between 1999 and 2007 she had been part of the Heart n Soul Experience, performing across Europe, and appearing at the Glastonbury Festival three years in a row, while she also took part in the Heart n Soul Unplugged tour of Asia.

In 2009, she released Loud and Proud, which examined her life experiences and was influenced by her childhood growing up in an Irish-Nigerian family in west London, surrounded by “folk, reggae and Afrobeat, but also Duran Duran and the Dubliners”, as well as soul and blues.

Her musical education [was strongly influenced](https://gal-dem.com/id-sing-and-dance-in-the-street-how-i-found-my-talent-as-a-musician-with-a-learning-disability/) by a year she spent in Dublin with her “inspirational” grandmother, a talented jazz and blues singer, a period of her life that she would later say “made me want to be a singer”.

Emeh did not read music, said Heart n Soul, so would first hear the beat in her head, before coming up with the lyrics and melody, and would collaborate with musicians to devise chords and arrangements to complete the songs.

She wanted people with learning difficulties to be proud of who they were, saying of Loud and Proud at the time: “I want this album to be an education to people.

“I want people to accept us for who we are and to respect us. I don’t want people to feel sorry for me, but understand me.”

In 2016, she collaborated with the London Symphony Orchestra to reinterpret some of her songs.

And between 2018 and 2020 she was part of an experimental research project at Wellcome Collection, [Heart n Soul at the Hub](https://heartnsoulatthehub.com/), which explored the value of difference.

She also performed at 10 Downing Street.

Rikki Jodelko, who worked and performed with Emeh for more than 20 years at Heart n Soul, said he first met her when she was 19.

Their first performance together was at a disability event in Dusseldorf, Germany.

“There she was on stage, singing her heart out,” he said this week. “Over-brimming with confidence and energy.”

He remembers writing a song with Emeh. “I just played a chord sequence on my guitar and she came up with this song within a matter of minutes, melody and lyrics.

“She was just such a natural composer. Her songs were all about her life and things that affected her. Straight from the heart.

“She was a massive personality. I am totally blind but you could not be unaware of her being in the room.

“She was ebullience personified. She did demand attention, but she usually got it because she was so lovely.

“The audience was always captivated by her because she was such a brilliant performer. She held the audience in the palm of her hand.

“She has left a massive Lizzie-shaped hole in the universe.”

Another disabled colleague, Tilley Milburn, a performance artist who worked with Emeh and appeared alongside her when hosting The Beautiful Octopus Club, said: “It’s wonderful just to make art or music because you love doing it, but with Lizzie it was even more powerful and more important because of what she was sharing.

“Everything that she created, every interview, anything she ever gave to us, it was about championing.

“It wasn’t just championing herself, it was championing and speaking up for anybody that struggles, anybody that feels outside in some way.”

She added: “She was very strong. I think she always had an inner confidence, an inner belief and courage.

“She was a very generous, very uplifting person. I always felt inspired by her and she supported me, she believed in me.

“It’s hard to believe that we have got her music, we can watch her videos, but I won’t get to host her again, I won’t get to see any new music, I won’t get to experience the magic of her coming onto that stage.”

She said Emeh had an “aura” and “magnetism”.

Every time she sung one of her own songs it was with “absolute conviction”, said Milburn.

“She absolutely always owned it. She means everything she’s saying and it’s so important to her.

“That’s what she was about: making art, making music, yes, it’s beautiful, and yes, she loved it, and was passionate about it, but it was so much more, it was so much deeper, it was getting that voice out there and it was showing what she could do.

“She had a wicked sense of humour, full of energy, full of charisma and she was a very fun person, very sensitive and loveable, she was great fun to be around.”

[Jenny Sealey](https://twitter.com/GraeaeJennyS), artistic director of Graeae Theatre Company, who was co-director of the opening ceremony of the London Paralympics, said Emeh had been “incredibly influential because of her voice, her music skills and her belief that she was paving the way for others to be artists and stand up for their rights to be a singer or musician”.

She said Emeh was “gloriously gracious, stubborn, political and kind”.

Sealey said: “I remember being very excited that she had agreed to be in the finale of the London 2012 Paralympic Opening ceremony, singing I Am What I Am with Beverley Knight and Caro Parker.

“She arrived for a costume fitting and a general introduction with the operation team.

“She was not feeling brilliant so was grumpy, but her ‘patronise’ radar was fully intact and she would roll her eyes at me when people were explaining stuff she knew inside out.

“On the day of the dress rehearsal she was on form, a true professional, delightful diva, and you saw the penny drop as those around her realised that she knew her stuff inside out.

“On the night itself she was awesome. Of course she was. I have an amazing piece of artwork of Lizzie on my wall and a larger copy at Graeae, so Lizzie is with us.”

Funeral arrangements have not yet been announced, but Heart n Soul will host an online event on 26 November, which will celebrate music created by some of its artists during lockdown.

Emeh had been due to perform at [Lockdown Mixtape 2](https://www.heartnsoul.co.uk/whatson/boc-mixtape) but the event will instead include some of her videos, while artists who are performing on the night will also discuss the impact she had and what she meant to them.

She leaves a husband, Eddie, a sister, Monica, and two brothers, Chris and Eddie.

**18 November 2021**

**Council apologises to disabled woman after decade of harassment by neighbours**

A council has apologised to a disabled, older woman who has faced a decade-long ordeal of harassment, hate crime and abuse at the hands of her neighbours.

The woman, who has long-term physical and mental health conditions, has noted hundreds of incidents of disability-related abuse, threats and false accusations that she has endured, and regularly passed them to Luton council.

Now the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) [has found that the council was at fault](https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/environment-and-regulation/antisocial-behaviour/19-018-711) over the way it dealt with her most recent complaints\*.

The ombudsman said that Miss X – who is not named in the report – lives alone and has faced years of harassment and abuse from her next-door neighbours since reporting them to the council more than 10 years ago for feeding vermin.

She has logged hundreds of incidents of anti-social behaviour and harassment over the last decade, including verbal abuse, derogatory comments about her mental health, threats to harm her, banging on her windows, and banging the lid of her wheelie bin.

In a fresh attempt to end the ordeal, she asked the council’s priority anti-social behaviour team to take action last year, following a series of new incidents, including one in which one of the neighbours stared at her for a long time and mouthed comments at her, and another in which a neighbour shouted “abusive and offensive remarks”, and made “derogatory” references to her mental health.

The council failed to take any significant action in response.

She later lodged a further complaint, that one of the neighbours had sworn at her, kicked her front door, and demanded she open it.

In response to the new complaint, the council again refused to take any action, telling her in November 2020 that the incidents were historic and had already been investigated and that there was nothing else it could do.

The ombudsman found that the council had wrongly failed to tell Miss X that she could use the “community trigger” process – introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 – which would have led to a multi-agency review of the way her complaints had been handled.

Thanks to the ombudsman’s report, this review is now taking place.

In December 2019, the council had rejected her complaint about the way it had handled her previous complaints, and she was later – wrongly – told that she could take the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).

But this advice was wrong, because HOS can only deal with complaints made by a council tenant or leaseholder, and Miss X owns her own home.

It was only when Miss X contacted her MP’s office that she was told she could complain to LGSCO instead, which she did in January this year.

The council said this week that it accepted the findings of the report, and its recommendations, which include paying Miss X £250 compensation, reminding its staff of their legal duties and the powers of HOS and LGSCO, and taking steps to promote awareness of the community trigger process.

A Luton council spokesperson said: “We apologise most sincerely to the woman affected by this matter.

“We take reports of anti-social behaviour extremely seriously, and we absolutely accept that we let both this resident and ourselves down for not following the correct procedures in this case.

“These are certainly not the high standards of service that our residents deserve, and that we expect from ourselves.

“We have learned from the findings of this report and have already tightened up our processes to ensure this does not happen again.

“Our teams have developed an action plan to address this fully.

“Any resident who needs to report an instance of anti-social behaviour to our team should do so using the contact details [available on our website](https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Community_and_living/crime-and-community-safety/Anti_social_behaviour/Pages/Reporting-crime-or-anti-social-behaviour.aspx).”

*\*The ombudsman was only investigating the council’s actions in the 12 months before she lodged her complaint in January 2021*

**18 November 2021**

**Other disability-related stories covered by mainstream media this week**

Tens of thousands of England’s poorest pensioners face paying the same for their old age care as wealthier people after the government published details of the new cap on home and care costs: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/17/englands-poorest-oaps-face-same-care-costs-as-wealthier-elderly-analysts-suggest>

Thousands of mentally ill people are in prison after being failed by every part of the criminal justice system, a comprehensive multi-inspectorate report has found: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/17/every-part-of-justice-system-fails-mentally-ill-people-inspectors-find?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter>

Katy Etherington’s personal assistants help her live independently and run a website matching up disabled people with PAs. But shortages are so acute some disabled people may be forced into residential care, she says: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/nov/17/carers-enable-us-to-live-not-just-exist-a-personal-care-employer-on-life-without-eu-workers>

**18 November 2021**

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