**New coalition will shine spotlight on ‘devastating’ impact of cost-of-living crisis**

A new coalition of disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) is aiming to shine a spotlight on the “devastating impact” of the spiralling cost of living that is “threatening disabled people’s survival”.

The Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG) warned this week that DPOs across the country were reporting that disability poverty was “widespread and deepening”.

The coalition has been set up to address increasing levels of poverty among disabled people affected by rising food and fuel prices, and the failure of benefits to keep up with those increases.

DPCG is currently led by a steering group of [Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/), [Inclusion London](https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/), and [Inclusion Barnet](https://www.inclusionbarnet.org.uk/), and is open to DPOs across the UK\*.

Julia Modern, Inclusion London’s senior policy and stakeholder engagement manager, said the group was answering the need for a “collective voice to challenge the neglect and discrimination” disabled people were facing.

She told Disability News Service (DNS): “Disability poverty has been exacerbated through years of cuts to government services.

“We face discrimination in employment, and access to legal redress has become much harder due to cuts to legal aid.

“Overall social security payment levels are inadequate, and ‘extra cost benefits’ – benefits designed to mitigate the extra costs of living with disability – do not reach all disabled people or meet the true level of additional costs we face.

“As inflation pushes fuel and food prices higher, many disabled people’s incomes no longer cover even the basics of existence.

“Added to this is a distinct lack of decent support packages provided by government and utility providers to help disabled people cope with spiralling debt.”

She added: “Even before the current price increases, DPOs were speaking to members who were getting up in the middle of the night to use the washing machine on the cheaper night tariff.

“With many disabled people already doing all they can to reduce costs, more advice on budgeting cannot fix the problem.”

Among the evidence DPCG points to is research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), which found in its [UK Poverty 2019-20 report](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2019-20) that, if extra-costs disability benefits are disregarded, nearly half of those in poverty live in a household that includes a disabled person.

In its latest [UK Poverty report](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2022), JRF says that – again, if extra-costs benefits such as personal independence payment (PIP) are disregarded – 32 per cent of disabled people are living in poverty.

For working-age adults, that climbs to 38 per cent, compared with 17 per cent of non-disabled working-age adults.

The Trussell Trust [reported in June 2021](https://www.trusselltrust.org/2021/06/28/the-state-of-hunger-its-not-right-that-disabled-people-are-being-forced-to-turn-to-food-banks/) that more than six in ten (62 per cent) working-age referrals to food banks in early 2020 were disabled people.

These figures were all compiled before the onset of the current cost-of-living crisis.

DPCG is also highlighting concerns about social care charges, which it says frequently reduce disabled people’s incomes to an insufficient “[minimum income guarantee](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-charging-for-local-authorities-2021-to-2022/social-care-charging-for-care-and-support-local-authority-circular-lacdhsc20211)” level.

This can be as low as £73.95 a week, “leaving some disabled people with barely anything to live on”.

Modern said: “Over a decade of cuts to the resources available to local government has led to increasing pressure on social care budgets, resulting in draconian council policies on care charging.

“As a result, many disabled people have to pay the meagre benefits they receive to the council to cover their essential care needs.

“Systematically reducing disabled people’s income to the level of the minimum income guarantee (which has been frozen for six out of the seven previous years) is profoundly unfair.”

This week, DNS is reporting how an ombudsman ruled that a disabled woman took her own life after being wrongly sent a series of invoices demanding payment of care charges she should not have had to pay (*see separate story*).

Meanwhile, freedom of information requests submitted by campaigners [have been showing](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/tens-of-thousands-driven-into-debt-by-care-charges-new-figures-show/) how tens of thousands of disabled people across the country are having debt collection action taken against them every year by their local authorities over unpaid care charges.

Rising energy prices are also having a significant impact on disability poverty.

The disability charity Scope [warned in 2019](https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag/) – even before the [current cost-of-living crisis](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/apr/13/inflation-march-britain-cost-of-living-soars) – that the average disabled person faced extra costs of £583 a month.

Energy charges make up a “significant proportion” of these extra costs, said DPCG.

Many disabled people need to use heating more often, need electricity to recharge their mobility equipment or run medical devices, and need to use equipment such as washing machines more often.

In March, even before the latest fuel price increases, one DPO advice worker told Inclusion London: “Pretty much all clients who contact us are needing help with fuel costs. Numbers have increased dramatically.”

DPCG’s first target is energy costs, and it plans to seek meetings with the government, mayors, councils, the energy regulator Ofgem, and energy companies, to push for “targeted support” for disabled people faced with sharply rising fuel bills.

Modern said the government had provided no targeted support for disabled people [in the measures it announced this year](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-support-for-energy-bills-and-the-cost-of-living-factsheets#full-publication-update-history) to help households with energy bills.

She also pointed to the government’s decision to [remove the right to the Warm Home Discount](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-caught-planning-to-claw-back-vital-support-through-universal-credit-migration/) from 290,000 claimants of disability living allowance and PIP.

She said: “Rather than helping us survive the spike in energy prices, the government is removing the only support that is currently delivered to disabled people for our higher energy costs.

“Coming on top of the existing appalling level of poverty among disabled people, the current increases in prices are threatening disabled people’s survival.”

DPOs that have already signed up to DPCG include [Action on Disability Kensington and Chelsea](https://www.adkc.org.uk/), [Cheshire Disabled People’s Panel](https://disabilitypositive.org/disability-positive-is-part-of-the-newly-launched-cheshire-disabled-peoples-panel/), [Choices and Rights Disability Coalition](https://choicesandrights.org.uk/), [Chronic Illness Inclusion](https://chronicillnessinclusion.org.uk/), [Disability Positive](https://disabilitypositive.org/), [The Disability Union](https://disabilityunion.co.uk/), [Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People](https://gmcdp.com/), [Harrow Association of Disabled People](https://www.had.org.uk/), [#MEaction](https://www.meaction.net/), [Merton CIL](https://www.mertoncil.org.uk/about-us/), and [WinVisible](https://winvisibleblog.wordpress.com/).

They are now calling for other DPOs to join the campaign group\*.

All the group’s members are DPOs, and all decisions will be made by disabled-led organisations, but DPCG is also attracting support from non-member allies such as The Food Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and The Trussell Trust.

*\*Any DPOs interested in joining can email* [*Julia Modern*](https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/coronavirus-updates-and-information/ddpo-organisational-support/delivering-advice-services/cost-of-living-crisis-get-help-with-energy-and-care-costs/)*, from Inclusion London, or* [*Dan White*](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2022/april/disability-poverty-campaign-group-launched)*, from Disability Rights UK*

**14 April 2022**

**‘Levelling-up’ government cash for 1,000 new homes… but not one of them will have to be wheelchair-accessible**

A government agency has announced that it will spend £15 million helping to fund more than 1,000 new family homes across three English counties, but not one of them will have to be suitable for a wheelchair-user to live in.

Homes England said the finance package from the government’s Levelling Up Home Building Fund and banking giant HSBC – which is contributing £30 million – will ensure “hundreds of families across Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset” will be able to move into new homes over the next five years.

And although 30 per cent of the homes will be affordable, none of them will have to be built to strict accessibility standards – known as the M4(3) standard – that will make them suitable for wheelchair-users.

Despite the continuing accessible housing crisis, Homes England has not imposed any accessibility conditions on [the new funding](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1000-new-homes-to-be-built-through-funding-partnership-with-hsbc) for “traditional housebuilder” Wyatt Homes.

Accessible housing experts Habinteg [warned last year](https://www.habinteg.org.uk/foraccessiblehomes-news/why-are-we-still-making-do-with-homes-that-are-not-fit-for-purpose-1769/) that an estimated 400,000 wheelchair-users were living in inaccessible housing.

But Wyatt Homes said that the proportion of the 1,000 new homes to be built to the [M4(3) standard or the less strict M4(2)](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Report_ForecastAccessibleHomes2020.pdf) – which include accessible and adaptable features but are not suitable as homes for wheelchair-users – would depend on the planning policies of the councils that control the areas it will build in.

But some of those local authorities are likely not to have any requirements on accessibility in their planning policies.

The government’s National Disability Strategy, [published last summer](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy), warned that “less than half of the local plans in England for new homes include requirements for a proportion of new homes to meet higher accessibility standards”.

Wyatt Homes said just 20 per cent of the homes in one of the locations – in Purbeck, Dorset – will be built to the less accessible M4(2) standard.

Hadyn Beazer, finance director of Wyatt Homes, confirmed to Disability News Service this morning (Thursday) that there was nothing in the agreement with Homes England to ensure that a minimum number of the new homes must be built to strict accessibility standards.

Prime minister Boris Johnson had said in the National Disability Strategy – [later found by a court to be unlawful](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/government-must-tear-up-national-disability-strategy-after-high-court-defeat/) – that “departments and agencies in every corner of Government” had set out “how they will do their bit to bring about the practical and lasting change that will make a material difference to the lives of disabled people right across our country”.

But just weeks before the publication of the strategy, the government had [announced plans](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/ministers-ignore-accessible-housing-while-spending-millions-on-thousands-of-new-homes/) to spend £30 million on housing projects across England, but without imposing a requirement for any of the housing schemes to include any homes built to either the M4(2) or the M4(3) standards.

Now the government has failed again to impose any accessibility requirements on the support from its Levelling Up Home Building Fund.

A Homes England spokesperson had declined to explain by noon today why the agency had not insisted that a minimum number of the 1,000 new homes should be built to strict accessibility standards.

But he said in a statement: “As the government’s housing and regeneration agency, our focus is on delivering the homes England needs, and it is important to us that as many people as possible have access to quality homes that are fit for purpose.

“Accessible housing provision is determined by local planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

“Adhering to local planning policy is one of the conditions that all developers must meet when receiving funding from us.”

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had refused by noon today to explain how it justified the decision to spend £15 million on the scheme but fail to ensure that any of the homes will be wheelchair-accessible.

**14 April 2022**

**Call for action on care charges, after woman’s suicide was linked to council’s invoices**

Disabled activists are calling for local authorities to take urgent action, following an ombudsman ruling that a disabled woman took her own life after being wrongly sent a string of invoices demanding payment of care charges she did not owe.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [ruled earlier this year](https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/adult-care-services/covid-19/21-000-364#point1) that the invoices sent to Mrs C by Essex County Council caused her unnecessary distress.

Her son had complained to the ombudsman that the invoices contributed to his mother’s decision to take her own life in January 2021.

The ruling in February came as freedom of information requests submitted by campaigners [were beginning to show](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/tens-of-thousands-driven-into-debt-by-care-charges-new-figures-show/) that tens of thousands of disabled people across the country were having debt collection action taken against them every year by their local authorities over unpaid care charges.

As a result of that information, [Cheshire Disabled People Against Cuts (CDPAC)](https://twitter.com/OCharging) called on councils to “urgently review their debt recovery codes of practice” and clarify how pursuing disabled people with support needs for care charge arrears upheld the Care Act’s “wellbeing principle”.

This week, a freedom of information response from Essex County Council, obtained by CDPAC, showed that more than 3,000 individuals in the county had debt management procedures started against them by the council in 2020-21 for failing to pay non-residential care charges.

Now CDPAC has called on senior figures in local government to learn from the ombudsman’s ruling and assess the impact of such debt recovery actions on disabled residents, particularly in the light of the “intensifying cost of living crisis that disproportionately affects disabled people on low incomes” (*see separate story*).

Mrs C, who had a history of mental distress, had been discharged from hospital in May 2020 into a care home following a “physical illness” – with those three weeks paid for from government pandemic funding – and was then returned to her own home the following month.

She began receiving support from a care agency, but in October the council started sending her invoices for her care, which her family said they had been told she would not be charged for.

By December, the council had still not completed a financial assessment, but had sent her a bill for outstanding charges of £4,400.

When the assessment was finally completed the following month, Mrs C was told she would have to contribute to her charges, and that she owed the council £3,300.

Around 10 days later, Mrs C paid the bill via an automated payment service. Later that day she took her own life.

Her son said later: “In my opinion she took her own life because she became obsessed with this large outstanding payment of £4k that the council were hounding her for (incorrectly).

“She felt she had deceived the council for non-payment….”

In March 2021, the council realised it should not have been charging Mrs C for care, and that the cost should have been met from the funding provided by the government in March 2020 to meet extra social care costs arising from the pandemic.

It refunded the charges to Mrs C’s estate but did not offer any explanation or apology to her family, although it later “expressed regret for its actions”.

It has since reviewed all cases where care charges should have been covered by the government funding, issued a new charging policy, and introduced a training programme on financial assessments and charging for all frontline staff.

The ombudsman was critical of the council’s failure to follow “good administrative practice” by not keeping a record for staff of how to use the government Covid funding, and in missing repeated opportunities to correct its failure to use the funding to cover Mrs C’s care charges.

The ombudsman said the council was also at fault for failing to realise the further distress it would cause Mrs C to receive the revised bill for more than £3,000 in January.

The ombudsman said it was concerned that the council knew in January 2021 that Mrs C “had been distressed by its earlier invoices and expressed concerns about their affordability” and “knew of her mental health illness and vulnerability” but took no steps to warn Mrs C or her son about the “substantial invoice” it was sending.

The council was also at fault, says the ombudsman’s report, for failing to have a policy that contained advice on dealing with “potentially vulnerable” service-users it charges for care.

Although the ombudsman said it would not be appropriate to say if the council’s invoices caused Mrs C to take her own life, it said there was “no doubt” the invoices sent to Mrs C “caused her distress”.

The council has agreed to issue a further apology to Mrs C’s son and pay him £500 for the distress caused by its actions, and to revise its policy on care charges.

A CDPAC spokesperson said: “The ombudsman has made very important recommendations in response to this distressing case.

“It is critical that directors of adult social care and chief executives consider those recommendations carefully and urgently.

“That work must involve councils inviting disabled people-led organisations to work in partnership with officers to properly assess the impact of social care charge debt recovery actions on disabled residents, in acknowledgment of an intensifying cost-of-living crisis that disproportionately affects disabled people on low incomes.”

She called on council officers to receive “urgent training” on the implications of the case, which should include that financial officers must identify cases where a financial assessment has been delayed.

She said that such delays “run the risk of placing the disabled resident with care needs at heightened risk of care charge-related poverty, and lowered wellbeing outcomes”.

CDPAC called on the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the National Association of Financial Assessment Officers to “work collaboratively to ensure disabled people being charged for their care are better protected from the acute distress associated with poverty and debt”.

An Essex County Council spokesperson refused to say if it accepted the dangers caused by debt collection of care charge arrears, and that debt recoveries were undermining the Care Act’s well-being principle; whether it accepted that all care charges should be scrapped; and what action it would take to ensure that its care charging policy did not cause other service-users the kind of distress caused to Mrs C.

But she said in a statement: “We have acknowledged and accepted the findings of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the recommendations contained in the report.

“We remain dedicated to ensuring all our residents receive the highest quality of care and are committed to learning to improve.”

She also refused to say if the council’s freedom of information response showed the urgency of taking action on debt collection of care charge arrears.

But she said in a further statement: “Where Essex County Council does undertake debt recovery for adult social care charges, it does so in accordance with Annex D of the [Department of Health and Social Care’s] [Care and Support Guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315993/Care-Act-Guidance.pdf) (PDF).”

**14 April 2022**

**Regulator tells DWP to explain silence on universal credit WCA stats**

The UK statistics regulator has told the Department for Work (DWP) to explain why it has yet to provide any statistics that show how disabled people seeking to claim universal credit are experiencing the work capability assessment (WCA) process.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) [has written](https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/mary-gregory-to-steve-ellerd-elliot-universal-credit-work-capability-assessment-statistics/) to DWP’s chief statistician Steve Ellerd-Elliott to ask for an explanation for the “gap in the information”.

OSR acted after Disability News Service wrote to the regulator last month to ask it to investigate DWP’s failure to provide the figures.

Despite ministers launching universal credit in 2013, DWP has yet to provide any statistics to show how many claimants have been put through the WCA, how long they have had to wait for a WCA, and what level of benefit they received following their assessment.

Mary Gregory, OSR’s deputy director for regulation, pointed in her letter to DWP to the “continued and unfulfilled need for WCA statistics since the rollout of Universal Credit”.

She said there was an “expectation” that such figures would be published, and she added: “It is not clear from what is publicly available, what, if any, plans are in place to address this and when they are anticipated to be completed.

“We expect statistics producers to be clear and transparent in their decision making, and to include reasons why gaps in reporting remain.”

She said in the letter that DWP had pointed out as part of a 2017 consultation that it hoped to investigate providing such figures but that “no further information on these areas for future exploration has been published”.

Ken Butler, welfare rights and policy adviser for [Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/), welcomed the OSR letter.

He said: “It’s good to see that the OSR is chasing up the DWP on this issue.

“If the DWP continues to stonewall, the OSR should use whatever powers it has to ensure that it complies.

“The DWP is beginning [the forced ‘managed’ migration of ESA claimants to universal credit](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-caught-planning-to-claw-back-vital-support-through-universal-credit-migration/).

“Scrutiny of how those already on universal credit are being treated in terms of work capability assessment referrals and outcomes is essential.

“Any lack of DWP transparency can only reinforce ESA claimants’ worries about having to leave the benefit.”

Freedom of information campaigner [John Slater](https://twitter.com/AmateurFOI) said the letter was a “nice shot across the bows of the DWP”.

He said: “It reminds people in the DWP of what was promised, and that the regulator is looking over their shoulder.”

He highlighted the importance of collecting, using and measuring data, particularly because of the “complexity” of universal credit.

He added: “If the DWP isn’t collecting and measuring data about key aspects of universal credit then its claims that all is going well must ring hollow.”

A DWP spokesperson said: “DWP will respond to the Office for Statistics Regulation in due course. The response will be published.”

Even though the WCA system has been closely linked to [countless deaths of disabled people over the last decade](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-the-case-for-the-prosecution/), DWP produces only statistics relating to employment and support allowance (ESA) and the WCA.

Most non-working disabled people are now receiving universal credit rather than ESA, which is slowly being phased out.

Sarah Newton, the minister for disabled people at the time, promised three years ago that DWP [would soon be publishing](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2019-02-12/220055) official WCA universal credit statistics.

But those figures were never published.

And when Chloe Smith, the new minister for disabled people, was asked a related question last December, [she claimed that](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-23/80407) it would be too expensive, even though the figures [are published for ESA claimants](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-including-mandatory-reconsiderations-and-appeals-march-2022).

**14 April 2022**

**Concern as NHS England blocks bid to see reviews of ‘unsafe’ SIM scheme**

NHS England is unlawfully blocking attempts to see reviews carried out across the country into the use of a mental health scheme that disabled campaigners have branded unethical, unlawful and unsafe.

The reviews were announced last spring following mounting concerns about the use of the Serenity Integrated Mentoring (SIM) system, and its rapid rollout across the NHS in England, despite the lack of quality research into its impact on mental heath service-users.

Concerted campaign pressure by the [StopSIM coalition](https://www.stopsim.co.uk/) had led to NHS England’s national clinical director for mental health, Tim Kendall, [writing to mental health trusts](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/nhs-england-must-do-more-despite-ordering-reviews-of-unsafe-mental-distress-scheme/) to call on them to review their use of the scheme.

But although many of those reviews were completed by January this year, NHS England has so far ignored attempts by Disability News Service (DNS) to obtain them under freedom of information (FOI) laws.

The request was first submitted in January and, other than automatic acknowledgements to show the emails were received by the NHS England freedom of information team, there has been no response to three DNS emails over the last three months.

NHS England’s communications team had also failed to respond to requests to comment on the organisation’s apparently unlawful behaviour by 11am today (Thursday).

The StopSIM coalition has described SIM as an “unacceptable step backwards in disability justice” and says that it has the effect of criminalising mental distress.

It says that SIM and SIM-type schemes put pressure on users of mental health services – often those at high risk of suicide and self-harm – who have not committed a crime but are seen as “high intensity users” of emergency services.

Despite being at very high risk of self-harm or suicide, individuals under SIM can be prevented from accessing potentially life-saving treatment from services such as ambulance services, accident and emergency departments, mental health crisis services, community mental health teams and the police.

SIM also gives police officers a key role in making clinical decisions when service-users are in crisis, and – says the coalition – is “heavily reliant” on their “coercive” powers to enforce “behavioural management”.

The coalition says: “The focus of SIM is on reducing service demand… not the patients’ well-being or experience.

“Indeed, we believe this programme will have the effect of re-traumatising individuals.”

A StopSIM coalition spokesperson told DNS this week: “Over [63,000 members of the public](https://www.change.org/p/nhs-england-stopsim-halt-the-rollout-and-delivery-of-sim-and-conduct-an-independent-review?utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=custom_url&recruited_by_id=f334d870-a439-11eb-8c79-ffd818ab467c) have supported our campaign calling for reviews of the SIM model: the substance of the reviews are a matter of public interest.

“NHS England have informally confirmed receipt of the FOI with the coalition on a number of occasions, and told us that they are in the process of preparing the documents for release.

“We are disappointed and concerned that NHS England have not complied with their duties under the Freedom of Information Act.”

**14 April 2022**

**Change of mindset is needed on adult social care, DPO boss tells peers**

The boss of a leading disabled people’s organisation has told peers of the need for a change in “mindset” about adult social care provision that appears automatically to view disabled people as “dependent”.

Ian Loynes, chief executive of [Spectrum Centre for Independent Living](https://spectrumcil.co.uk/), said that altering this mindset would “change the way that we provide social care in this country, to make it clear that the ambition is for our independence and to minimise dependency”.

He was [giving evidence](https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/d049e668-c931-415f-be2e-574b56db5690) to the House of Lords adult social care committee as part of its [adult social care inquiry](https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6478/adult-social-care/).

Loynes told the committee: “Most definitely there needs to be a change in perception and a change of understanding about disabled people and older people.

“There’s a notion that once you become disabled, you’re automatically dependent on somebody else, you’re just looked after and you’re wasting your life until you die.

“That’s not the reality for… disabled people [of any age].

“We all want to make the most of our lives, we only get to live once, and disabled people should have that right to live a decent life and a life of their choice and their ambitions to be met.”

Loynes said the “vast majority” of social care was “seen in that negative aspect” and was about “looking after people rather than allowing people to live a lifestyle of their choice”.

He stressed the importance of providing support to older and disabled people through direct payments, which research had shown should be cheaper, and allows service-users to choose who provides their support.

He also called for locally-based peer support services like Spectrum to be more valued, and for the government to do more to inform people about the “different ways that people can have their needs met”.

He pointed to the financial “struggle” faced by many centres for independent living (CILs) around England, including Spectrum, while he said many CILs have already “failed to exist” as services are tendered out by local authorities.

He told the committee that disabled people “should have a right to that sort of peer support and be able to gain that easily and be able to choose where that comes from”.

Loynes pointed to the [Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People white paper](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100407165048/http%3A/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/disability.aspx), published by the prime minister’s strategy unit under a Labour government in 2005, which called for every local authority area to have a user-led organisation modelled on existing CILs by 2010.

He said that, 17 years on, that recommendation was still seen as an “aspiration rather than an objective”.

**14 April 2022**

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

The mother of a terminally ill girl with just “days to live” says she can’t afford to keep the heating on due to the cost of living crisis: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/girl-heating-cost-living-crisis-b2057413.html>

Disabled actor Liz Carr has suggested theatres consider hosting separate performances of shows for audiences who still want to wear facemasks or socially distance. The Silent Witness star won best supporting actress at Sunday’s Oliviers for her role in The Normal Heart. As live audiences have mostly abandoned wearing masks, Carr suggested venues could offer “Covid-safer” performances: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-61061976>

An office manager who was sacked after 18 years in the job when she asked for a new chair has been awarded £23,000 by an employment tribunal. Lynda Walker, who had experienced a hip condition for three years and was waiting for treatment, had to leave work for four months: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/office-manager-wins-23000-after-26658128>

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