



**Disability  
Equality  
Scotland**

Welcome to the latest issue of  
**OPEN DOOR**, the quarterly magazine  
from Disability Equality Scotland

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# OPEN DOOR

**Disability News and Views for Disabled People Across Scotland**

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Issue 56: Embedding Inclusive Communication in Recovery

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## Your Disability, Your Voice, Your Scotland...

Disability Equality Scotland is a member led organisation, so we want to hear from you, our valued members!

Get in touch with us with your disability news by email at:

[admin@disabilityequality.scot](mailto:admin@disabilityequality.scot) or by calling on **0141 370 0968**

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# CEO's Welcome

Dear Member

Welcome to another jam-packed edition of our Open Door magazine!

One of our key commitments at Disability Equality Scotland is to raise awareness of inclusive communication, which is the theme for this edition of Open Door. Inclusive communication is an approach to communication which enables as many people as possible to be included. It is achieved by allowing individuals to use whichever ways of understanding and expressing themselves they find easiest. I am delighted that we have an excellent selection of articles from various organisations that are dedicated to championing the concept of inclusive communication.



I would also encourage you to visit the Inclusive Communication Hub ([www.inclusivecommunication.scot](http://www.inclusivecommunication.scot)), a website that we host in partnership with Sense Scotland. Here you can find lots of useful information and guidance on how to make information and communications more accessible for disabled people. On the website we have a survey that you can complete to provide feedback and suggestions on the website. Please contact us if you require the survey in an alternative format.

I would like to end by sending my huge thanks and appreciation to all members and Access Panels for your continued engagement through these challenging and uncertain times. In particular, your contributions to our weekly polls and webinars are vital to creating an evidence-base across various policy areas. We swiftly share your comments with key stakeholders to influence policy, guidance and Equality Impact Assessments – which has been incredibly important throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Please continue to contribute when you can.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Morven Brooks'.

Morven Brooks, Chief Executive Officer

## About Us

We are a national charity working to make life more accessible, equal and inclusive for disabled people in Scotland.

We promote access in its widest sense, including access to the built and natural environment and access to the same opportunities as are enjoyed by others in our communities thus promoting a life of dignity, respect, choice and independence. This extends beyond physical access to include access to information, access to inclusive communication and inclusion in decision-making, whether with planners over inclusive design or transport providers about accessible travel.

## Our Mission:

Our mission at Disability Equality Scotland is to give all disabled people in Scotland a voice with trust, care and empathy. We will use what we hear to advocate for and enable change to improve lives.

We will achieve this through:

- Working with Access Panels
- Working with members
- Working with partners and stakeholders

## Our Vision:



**Working towards Equality,  
Inclusion and Participation for  
Disabled People in Scotland**

# Inform

## Our Team



### **Morven Brooks - Chief Executive Officer**

Morven works with the team to ensure that Disability Equality Scotland promotes the value of and represents the opinions of disabled people. Morven provides a strategic and operational understanding of access and inclusion in Scotland including establishing an evidence base that informs policy and best practice.



### **Emma Scott - Operations Manager**

Emma is responsible for managing a broad number of projects and initiatives. Emma works closely with the CEO to implement the organisation's strategy to work towards social inclusion for disabled people in Scotland.



### **Ian Buchanan - Equality and Access Manager**

Ian's role is to support, develop and promote the Access Panel Network. Ian is also responsible for providing guidance on accessibility to external organisations and managing our Disability Equality Access and Learning training course.



### **James Davidson - Communications and Research Coordinator**

James is responsible for sharing and promoting information such as news, events and consultations to our members in a clear and accessible manner. This includes producing our monthly newsletter and magazine, 'Open Door'. James is also responsible for the upkeep and population of all website content.

# Inform

## Our Team Continued...



### **Ali Bruce – Access and Engagement Administrator**

Ali is our Access and Engagement Administrator and he works with Ian to provide support to the Access Panel Network in Scotland through training, outreach, and capacity building. He also administers the Access Panel Grant and works with Emma on helping to deliver our disability roadshows and transport events.



### **Fiach O'Broin-Molloy- Project Coordinator**

Fiach is responsible for a project to pilot a Hate Crime Charter on the ferries network. This project builds on the success of the pilot carried out in 2019 on the train and bus networks. The Charter acts as a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime on public transport.



### **Shona McEwan - Easy Read Worker**

Shona produces information in Easy Read, an accessible format that makes written information easier to understand for people with a learning disability. Shona's previous jobs involved working with adults with a learning disability and she has always been a strong advocate of inclusive communication.



### **Claire Jagger - Easy Read Worker**

Claire joins the team to expand our Easy Read service. For more information about our Easy Read service, including the benefits of Easy Read and examples of our work visit:

[www.easyread.scot](http://www.easyread.scot)

# Inform

## Our Directors

### **Linda Bamford – Convener**

After 13 years as a frontline paramedic in Glasgow, Linda moved into management, holding various senior management positions within the Ambulance Service for a further 15 years. Linda has a passion for equality and doing the right thing and strives through her work and volunteering to bring about transformational changes that will assist everyone to lead their lives as they choose.

### **Dorothy McKinney – Vice Convener**

Dorothy has over 35 years' experience in Human Resources and has fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Dorothy is also a Registered Mediator with the Scottish Mediation Network and undertakes pro bono support for Peer Mediators in local schools.

### **Colin Millar – Treasurer**

Colin is currently the Chief Executive Officer (Executive Director) of the Scottish Personal Assistant Employers Network (SPAEN). As a young child, Colin had Legg-Calvé Perthes Disease, a disease which significantly impaired his mobility and independence, an experience he draws on daily as he now seeks to support others to live full, active and inclusive lives and fulfil their potential and ability.

### **Susan Fulton – Director**

Susan is a local authority Chartered Surveyor with a background in the construction industry, diversifying into the field of accessibility in 2004. Susan obtained her MSc in Accessibility and Inclusive Design from the University of Salford. Susan is also a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and is a consultant member of the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC).

### **Carolyn Wilson-Smith – Director**

Carolyn has worked in the public and private sectors: 23 years with Barclays Bank and 12 years in the public sector with a Local Authority and is currently working in the NHS. Her areas of expertise include human resource development, organisational development, project management, consultation and engagement. Carolyn also has a strong sense of fairness and equality.

# Inform

## **Kenny Milne – Director**

Kenny has been mainly employed in various management structures at different levels including Site Manager on a busy pharmaceutical site. Whilst employed as Site Manager Kenny had an accident at work leading him to suffer major damage to his lower back. Kenny has since taken up various volunteering roles including chairing the Three Towns Disability Forum and the North Ayrshire Carers Forum.

## **Lauren Asher – Director**

Lauren is a full-time Youth Worker based in Dumfries and Galloway. Following on from the Global Changemakers Summit 2018, Lauren set up Invisible Life – a personal blog sharing her experiences of living with Asperger's, in the hope of educating others and providing insight into her day-to-day challenges.

## **Maureen Morrison – Director**

Maureen has experience working at board level, having been a Director with Spinal Injuries Scotland for six years before taking up the position of interim General Manager. The skills Maureen brings to the Board are: a lived experience of disability, the ability to connect and develop partnerships and fundraising.

## **Rhianne Forrest - Director**

Rhianne is a Creative Writing, Journalism and English literature Graduate. She has worked on projects such as Thistle Assistance and more. Creative, passionate and an advocate, Rhianne continues to work for accessibility and inclusion rights for disabled people across Scotland.

## **Scott Stewart - Director**

As Manager for Disability Information Scotland, Scott is aware of the challenges experienced by disabled people, their families and carers. Scott constantly strives to break down the barriers that hinder the opportunities to disabled people in our society.

# Inform

## Director Focus: Linda Bamford – Convener

I returned to volunteering after early medical retirement from my 34 year career with NHS Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service. I retired due to a spinal cord injury, resulting in me being a wheelchair user, managing complications of Cauda Equina Syndrome and struggling with chronic pain.

I was in a dark place after my injury and volunteering helped me regain my self-esteem, confidence and gave me a sense of purpose again. It helped me learn more about my disability and how to manage some of the daily challenges I'd been struggling with and found hard to accept.

After retiral, I felt hopeless and thought I would no longer use the skills and experience gained during my career. But these skills were invaluable in my volunteering and it was good to be able to use them on issues that I was passionate about. My central belief and career choices focussed on caring for and helping others and through Disability Equality Scotland, Children's Hearings Scotland and Spinal Injuries Scotland, I got to continue to use these skills and value what I still had to give, even from a wheelchair.

My volunteer roles have allowed me to learn more and better understand people's needs, in particular that no two people are the same or have the same needs even if they have been 'labelled' with the same injury or illness. After struggling to accept my disability, reading about the Social Model of Disability was a light bulb moment. I was hooked, understanding that I needed to work with others to change how places and services were designed and delivered so nobody was excluded.

My volunteering also allows me to take what people share with me into my work as Convener of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and Commissioner for the Poverty and Inequality Commission. I am lucky that the team at Disability Equality Scotland share my passions. It also helps that they are a good bunch of folk that I learn from every day. They are all very patient with me in their teachings. You know the old saying – 'every day's a school day'.



## Director Focus: Dorothy McKinney – Vice Convener



Since I was a child, I have been motivated by fairness and equity, my Mum's approach to life was 'equal to all and better than none'. Which was very insightful for a lady who brought up four girls during the troubles in Northern Ireland.

We are all different in so many ways, however it's important that those differences do not hinder our aspirations, achievements and life experiences.

Working as Director of Disability Equality Scotland has allowed me to use over 40 years working in HR to support the Board, Chair, CEO and the staff team with people related issues.

However, HR is my comfort zone and I have learnt so much more as I progress through my second term as a Director of Disability Equality Scotland:

- I have gained a better understanding of the needs of those who have disabilities and how an organisation like Disability Equality Scotland along with the local Access Panels can influence and impact on individual lives.
- How an organisation like Disability Equality Scotland with a talented Board and staff team can influence those in power in our society.
- An understanding of the challenges and opportunities of good governance and the responsibilities that this brings to each Director.
- Working with Directors and staff with a wide range of experiences and extending my knowledge and understanding of disabilities, influencing and impacting on change which I will take with me in every other area of my life both personal and professional.

Working as a volunteer Director has been an honour and a pleasure and as I progress to the end of my second term I hope that the next person in the role gets as much satisfaction as I have.

# Inform

## National Hate Crime Charter Launched

Our Operations Manager Emma Scott provides an update on the launch of the National Hate Crime Charter.

97% of disability hate crime goes unreported.

This is a shocking statistic, and one that Disability Equality been working to address. As a membership organisation, disabled people often brush off incidents of abuse, harassment and bullying because they are all too common. raise awareness of disability hate crime and encourage victims, but witnesses) to make reports.

So we were delighted to support the launch of the National Charter for public transport on 24 March 2021. This was the four-years' worth of consultation and engagement with and other vulnerable groups.

Disability Equality Scotland led the Working Group made up of key partners including South-East Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTran), People First Scotland, Police Scotland and British Transport Police, for this project on behalf of, Transport Scotland.

We want all people using public transport networks in Scotland to be free from hate crime, prejudice, bullying or harassment. The Hate Crime Charter is to encourage transport providers and passengers to support a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime and encourage the reporting of incidents.

Prior to launch, we held a series of consultation events to understand what a Charter would have to be like, and what design would have the most impact. Three designs of a Charter were piloted during December 2019, where we worked with transport partners, Stagecoach, FirstBus and ScotRail. Over an eight-week period, the Charter was seen by 1.2million passengers. Initial results demonstrated an increased awareness amongst transport staff who also felt better equipped to recognise and report hate crime that they encountered.



## >>> Article Continues...



Recent statistics released from Police Scotland and feedback from members of Disability Equality Scotland through our series of weekly polls, indicated that hate crime incidents have increased during the pandemic.

We wanted to make sure that as Scotland eases out of lockdown and that there is a return to public transport, that people feel safe and comfortable to do so. We know from our public consultations that people

would rather travel on a service that shows its commitment to tackling hate crime, than not. This Charter provides clear and common standards for challenging hate crime, encouraging reporting with the overall aim of prevention of hate crime incidents on the public transport network.

I was delighted to gain the support of Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity Michael Matheson who said:

“I fully support the launch of the national Hate Crime Charter for public transport. I commend the work of Disability Equality Scotland and partners for promoting this zero-tolerance approach.

“We want Scotland to have a transport network that is safe for everyone to use and this Charter will help to raise awareness of hate crime, in all its forms, and remind everyone that it will not be tolerated.”

The next stage is to encourage as many transport providers as possible to pledge their support. We want people to visit our dedicated pages on the Accessible Travel Hub website – [www.accessibletravel.scot/hate-crime](http://www.accessibletravel.scot/hate-crime)

Here you’ll find information on how to become a supporter of the Charter, but also how to recognise and report incidents of hate crime.

# Inform

## Safe and Inclusive Ferries for All

Disability Equality Scotland Project Coordinator, Fiach O'Broin-Molloy, provides you with the latest on our Ferries for All project.

Whether you board a boat in Brodick, ride the rails to Rosyth or catch the coach to Calendar you should always expect to be able to travel safely. Safe travel is a human right. Too often, disabled people experience violence, intimidation and harassment when going about their lives. The impact of this can be compounded when it comes to public transport. Being stuck on a bus, train or boat with an aggressor is a frightening prospect. Our members tell us that they often avoid these situations forcing them further into isolation and locking them out of the opportunity to enjoy their freedom of movement.



That is why we teamed up with transport providers in Scotland to produce a national Hate Crime Charter. A summary of the launch of the Hate Crime Charter can be found on page 11.

We are delighted to have been further trusted by the Scottish Government to continue rolling this charter and these principles out further. Over this year we will be working with NorthLink Ferries. NorthLink carry tens of thousands of passengers a year to some of Scotland's most far flung and beautiful places. We are delighted to be able to work in partnership with NorthLink to make sure that disabled people can travel free from the fear of violence, intimidation and harassment.

We have already started working with NorthLink colleagues to gather information about their current levels of confidence and competence in dealing with disability hate crime. This will help us to establish a much needed baseline for our work and determine what kind of support they need to improve services for disabled people.

If you would like to share a story with us about your experience of traveling with NorthLink Ferries please email [hatecrimecharter@disabilityequality.scot](mailto:hatecrimecharter@disabilityequality.scot)

## Face Covering Exemption Card: Project Update



Since the introduction of the mandatory wearing of face coverings last summer, and in light of Disability Equality Scotland's member's concerns raised through our weekly poll on the introduction of face coverings, we were very happy to work with the Scottish Government to introduce a national exemption card. The card would be made available through applications on our dedicated website ([www.exempt.scot](http://www.exempt.scot)), or by calling the Freephone helpline

number (0800 121 6240), and the project was launched to the public in late October 2020.

Over the first two weeks of the campaign we saw over 1,150 calls to the helpline and nearly 28,000 applications in total. This workload required all of the staff at Disability Equality Scotland to help out, with everyone taking calls over the first couple of days, and all of the staff in the office and volunteers from the Scottish Government helping out with packing letters and cards into envelopes for posting to applicants who had requested physical cards.

To date, we have now supplied over 74,000 physical exemption cards and over 49,000 digital versions. We have also answered over 3,000 calls to the helpline since it opened. Demand for the cards has varied over the time the project has been running, with a spike in demand when most of the large supermarket chains announced much tighter implementation of face covering rules in January, and another spike recently, as we move towards a significant relaxation of lockdown restrictions.

At the beginning of February this year, we started sending out invitations to card holders to complete our feedback survey, to allow us to evaluate the impact the card has had since its introduction. We have now received over 5,000 responses to the survey, a fantastic response rate of 23% from all of the invitations issued. This has allowed us to better understand the impact the card has had, and the challenges people are still facing in the community.

# Inform

## Scottish Parliament Election 2021: Manifesto Tracker

A manifesto is a publication issued by a political party before an election. It contains the set of policies that the party stands for and would wish to implement if elected to govern. During the lead up to this year's Scottish Parliament election, we launched a tracker to highlight the accessible formats of manifestos published by the five political parties elected in the last Parliament.



The Electoral Commission published a report entitled "Elections for Everyone", which highlights the challenges disabled people face during an election and what improvements can be made to make elections more inclusive and accessible for all. The report recommends that when political parties publish their manifestos, they should make sure accessible formats are available at the same time. Examples of accessible formats include: audio, Braille, British Sign Language (BSL), Easy Read, large print and plain text.

The first image on the next page features the list of accessible formats that were available when each of the five parties launched their manifestos two weeks prior to the Scottish Parliament election. We were extremely disappointed by the lack of alternative formats made available. Disabled people deserve access to the information they need to vote, in a format accessible to them.

By sharing the Manifesto Tracker on our social media channels, this resulted in some of the political parties contacting us directly to state they were in the process of having their manifestos converted to alternative formats. The second image on the next page shows the range of formats available the day before the election. Although this was an improvement, in some cases the alternative formats were not available by the time some of our members had cast their postal vote.

At Disability Equality Scotland, we will continue to work with political parties to raise awareness of why it is important to produce information in a variety of accessible formats.

# Inform

## Manifesto Tracker: 22 April 2021 (14 days before the election)

Available formats: ↓	 Scottish Conservative & Unionist	 SCOTTISH GREENS	 Scottish Labour	 Scottish Liberal Democrats	 SNP
Audio	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Braille	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
British Sign Language (BSL)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Easy Read	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Large Print	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Plain Text	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗

## Manifesto Tracker: 5 May 2021 (1 day before the election)

Available formats: ↓	 Scottish Conservative & Unionist	 SCOTTISH GREENS	 Scottish Labour	 Scottish Liberal Democrats	 SNP
Audio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Braille	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
British Sign Language (BSL)	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Easy Read	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Large Print	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Plain Text	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Inform

## **Inclusive Communication Hub** - [www.inclusivecommunication.scot](http://www.inclusivecommunication.scot)

We work in partnership with Sense Scotland to host the Inclusive Communication Hub, a website dedicated to inclusive communication information, guidance and resources.



Inclusive Communication is an approach to communication which enables as many people as possible to be included. It allows the largest number of people in the population to take part in communication with services. It does this by allowing and enabling individuals to use whatever ways of understanding and expressing themselves which they find easiest.

Throughout this Hub you will find helpful resources such as case studies and blogs from employers and individuals, details of training and the latest news on Inclusive Communication. The case studies that we have published are perfect examples of how we should all adopt Inclusive Communication in our ways of working and general day-to-day communications.

It is vital that information about the COVID-19 pandemic is available to the public in a variety of accessible formats, such as: audio, British Sign Language (BSL) Braille, Easy Read, and plain text. We have added a category on the Hub specifically relating to COVID-19 Resources, which signposts to guidance produced by various organisations in a variety of accessible formats.

## **Inclusive Communication Hub Survey**

We have created a survey which will help us to understand your awareness and experiences of Inclusive Communication. We also feature a series of questions about the Inclusive Communication Hub, which will help to shape and grow the website going forward.

Take part in the online survey:

[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/InclusiveCommunicationHub](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/InclusiveCommunicationHub)

You can also access the survey in various alternative formats on our website:

[www.inclusivecommunication.scot/survey](http://www.inclusivecommunication.scot/survey)

# Inform

## Information Hubs

In addition to the Inclusive Communication Hub, we also host websites that feature information, resources, case studies and news on the following topics:

### Disability Safety Hub - [www.disabilitysafety.scot](http://www.disabilitysafety.scot)



**Disability  
Safety  
Hub**

Funded by the Scottish Government, we worked in partnership with Police Scotland to develop the Disability Safety Hub; a website to help you identify hate crime and how to report it. The website contains a wealth of resources, including videos, case studies and useful numbers and contacts to help you stay safe.

### What is Hate Crime?

The Scottish Government defines Hate Crime as crime committed against a person or property that is motivated by 'malice or ill-will towards an identifiable social group'. In Scotland, the law currently recognises hate crimes as crimes motivated by prejudice based on: race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, disability.

### COVID-19 Resources

It is important to look after your mental health as well as your physical health during uncertain and stressful times. We are updating the Disability Safety Hub with information to help you stay safe and well during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic:

- We have produced a mental wellbeing guide that provides links to useful information on how to maintain good mental health.
- We are continuing to post the latest guidance on our news and blog.
- For more resources visit The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) [mental health information hub](http://www.samh.org.uk).

# Inform

## Accessible Travel Hub - [www.accessibletravel.scot](http://www.accessibletravel.scot)

The Accessible Travel Hub is a website for you to find information, articles and guidance on Accessible Travel in Scotland. The Hub launched alongside the Accessible Travel Framework, a ten-year plan by Transport Scotland to improve travel access for disabled people.



### What Can I Find on the Hub?

- Articles and Information on accessible transport in Scotland; including the rules and responsibilities of transport providers.
- Links to resources, including PAMIS' map of Changing Places toilets, Radar keys, Thistle Cards, Traveline Scotland, Hate Crime Reporting.
- Signpost to relevant training courses, including disability awareness and Inclusive Communication.
- News and blog featuring up to date information about the response to COVID-19, including changes to timetables and passenger assistance.

## Inclusive Design Hub - [www.inclusivedesign.scot](http://www.inclusivedesign.scot)

This Hub aims to improve awareness and encourage the take-up of inclusive design in Scotland. An inclusive approach to design ensures that the built environment is accessible to as many people as possible.



### What Can I Find on the Hub?

- Articles on the importance of inclusive design.
- Case studies that demonstrate innovative examples of inclusive environments in Scotland.
- A resources library that provides links to inclusive design guidance from a variety of sources.
- A blog featuring inclusive design news, events and consultations.

# Support

## Disability Equality Scotland: Why You Should Use Easy Read

Our Easy Read team has created a 'Ten Top Tips' on why it is important to convert information into the Easy Read format.



If you have not used Easy Read before, here are our Ten Top Tips to help you start!



1. It supports you to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Disabled people have a legal right to accessible information.



2. Everyone needs good access to accessible information.

Easy Read makes written information easier to understand and will help your information reach as wide an audience as possible.



3. It puts your information into simple, shorter sentences with pictures and without jargon.

# Support



## >>> Article Continues...

4. It makes information easier to understand for people with a learning disability or communication difficulty.



5. It is also used by people whose first language is not English, and people with a hearing impairment whose first language is British Sign Language.



6. Easy Read gives people the power to develop their understanding of issues and make informed choices.



7. Publishing an Easy Read version at the same time as your main document shows your commitment to equality and inclusion.

Without doing this you exclude many people.



8. Disability Equality Scotland can produce it in good time and at a competitive price!  
View more details at: [www.easyread.scot](http://www.easyread.scot)

# Support

## >>> Article Continues...



9. We can give you a quote and examples of previous work and talk through any questions you might have.



10. We have a proven track record of producing high quality work for organisations including the Scottish Government and Police Scotland.

## So what are you waiting for?!



Think about the information you want to tell people about. It could be minutes of a meeting, a new project, or a consultation survey. Keep your deadlines and launch dates in mind and get in touch with us as early as possible.



To see how our Easy Read service can help you, email: [shona@disabilityequality.scot](mailto:shona@disabilityequality.scot) or call 0141 378 6783 for an informal chat.

We look forward to hearing from you.

# Support

## Sense Scotland

Recently at Sense Scotland, we have been updating information on the communication approaches and systems that we regularly use. This has reminded us of two main ideas: 1) the human need to connect with others to share stories, information and our life experiences is incredibly powerful; and 2) humans are incredibly diverse in their efforts to make contact with other people.

On a day-to-day basis, in Sense Scotland we use more than 25 different communication systems. Amongst this, there are at least 10 different signed communication and language approaches, including British Sign Language (BSL), tactile forms of BSL used by people who are deafblind and Sign Supported English (BSL signs are used but in the word order of spoken English as opposed to BSL's own grammatical rules). Other sign-supported systems such as Makaton and Signalong were originally developed for learners who have communication support needs arising from learning disabilities. The Cannan-Barrie system was developed to support the learning of children and young people who were deafblind and incorporates tactile on-body signs that grow from the tactile-bodily perspective of someone born deafblind. There are people who use BSL finger-spelling, Deafblind Manual and even American Sign Language (ASL) finger-spelling.

Some schools will prefer one approach over another and sometimes the choice reflects the sensory and learning needs of individual children. There are similar choices made around tactile writing systems (e.g. Braille or Moon) and visual symbol systems (e.g. Widgit, Makaton, PCS, Bliss etc). These decisions affect people for their whole lives and likely will become their preferred language - which is why we have more than 25 systems in use every day. Some people use more than one approach. For example, spoken language and visual symbols; Makaton signs but PCS symbols; concrete objects of reference for some activities yet abstract for other activities. And people often use different systems to receive and express information. For example, you might listen to spoken information and respond using Makaton – or the other way around; you may use tactile BSL to receive information and visual BSL to express your thoughts; you could use a combination of photographs and Widgit symbols to understand your activity choices and then use your body language/movements to make the choice.



# Support

## >>> Article Continues...

Sometimes two approaches might be combined. For example, you use BSL but you understand more if it is signed slowly, less signs are used, signs unique to you are added in, the other person signs at just the right distance, images are used to supplement some of the signs. We could think of this as Easy-Sign BSL, similar to Easy Read documents which still use written English but with straightforward vocabulary and sentence structure, supplementary pictures and easier to follow layouts.

Could we provide an Easy Read Braille version of a consultation document, or a Large Print Easy Read summary of a Self-Directed Support leaflet, or a Support Plan that incorporates three different symbol systems as well as photographs and written text? These are the challenges that Sense Scotland and many organisations face on a day-to-day basis. If a consultation document arrives, even in accessible formats, we may have to work for many weeks to prepare additional versions of documents unique to the particular needs of people we support. We have learned from creative BSL interpreters, who have followed people around a room, even lain down on the floor next to them, whilst amending the speed of signing and incorporating individual signs, so that people are genuinely included in meetings. If people wish to be involved in recruiting their staff teams, we have prepared job descriptions in multiple formats; practiced with people using voice output devices or MP3 recordings on phones and tablets so they were confident asking their question; prepared interview scoring sheets in various formats so everyone can input their feedback. We prepare minutes of meetings in audio, Braille, graphics, Easy Read, BSL so that everyone has a full record of decisions and outcomes.

It is not enough to provide one size fits all solutions and imagine that inclusive communication is done! But it is not easy tailoring your communication approaches to meet the communication support needs of everyone you meet in life. That's the challenge, however, if we wish to include everyone in the decisions affecting their lives.

For further information on the examples highlighted here, please contact [pic@sensescotland.org.uk](mailto:pic@sensescotland.org.uk) or look up the resources on Scotland's Inclusive Communication Hub: [www.inclusivecommunication.scot](http://www.inclusivecommunication.scot)

# Support

## Dyslexia Scotland

Dyslexia Scotland is a national charity whose aim is to help children and adults with dyslexia reach their full potential. 1 in 10 people in Scotland is dyslexic. Most assume that dyslexia is just about reading, writing and spelling but it can also affect things such as organisation, following instructions and short term memory difficulties. As well as the difficulties dyslexia can present, we also focus on the positives of dyslexia such as creativity, out of the box thinking and strong problem solving skills.



We do this through our network of volunteer led branches and Adult Networks, Education conference for teachers, tailored training for workplaces and providing information and advice through our Helpline which anyone can contact: 0344 800 84 84. Often, what helps people with dyslexia can be beneficial to a wider group. This applies in classrooms where use of coloured paper or overlays on screen, clear text font and thoughtful layout of a document can help not just those with dyslexia. One of the simplest things that can help is not using black text on a white background as this can make it difficult for people with visual stress to read. Dyslexia Scotland uses buff coloured paper and blue text on all of our publications. Assistive technology has made a huge positive benefit towards making information more accessible. There are myriad free/low cost apps and programmes that can easily convert text to speech, speech to text and help people find the right spelling word.

Identification of dyslexia has improved hugely and many children are now identified early in school and the appropriate support is put in place, allowing them to build on their strengths to overcome some of the things they find difficult. For adults, 'disclosing' dyslexia in the workplace can be a fraught experience as some are worried about prejudice that still exists among some employers. Our aim is to explain to employers that their dyslexic employees can often be among some of the most creative members of the team who are a huge asset and simply putting some simple small adjustments to the workplace can make the world of difference. Find out more: [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)

# Support

## Charities Call for Action On Sensory Poverty



Five charities have joined together to call for the provision of sensory literate mental health services to support the 1.3 million people living with sensory loss in Scotland.

The Health and Social Care Alliance, Sight Scotland, deafscotland, Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and Deafblind Scotland have worked together to research the impact of sensory loss on emotional wellbeing and to make the case to Scottish Ministers for why urgent action is required to provide accessible communications in all mental health services.

The recommendations in the charities' report "Mental Health, Sensory Loss and Human Rights" are rooted in the principle that Inclusive Communication is a human right and a gateway to the equal enjoyment of rights. The charities believe mental health services must be 'Sensory Literate' if they are to be accessible for people with sensory loss, with training for staff so they are aware of people's specific needs. The report also sets out specific actions to address longstanding sensory poverty and to support people with sensory loss as part of the Scottish Government's action plan "Mental Health - Scotland's Transition and Recovery." Research undertaken by the charities has shown that people living with sensory loss have been particularly affected by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and that more needs to be done to help them deal with the mental health impacts of their disability.

Research by Sight Scotland has highlighted that two thirds of blind and partially sighted people felt lockdown had been a worse experience for them because of their sight loss. The charity's report 'Emotional Support for Sight Loss' found that 85% of blind and partially sighted had experienced challenges to their mental health but two thirds had not been offered support.

# Support

## >>> Article Continues...

deafscotland's report "Covid-19: The Communication Virus" found that self-isolation and social distancing left people affected by deafness more isolated than is usual and becoming mentally unwell without access to support.

The charities have outlined a number of recommendations to ensure the right support is available for people with sensory loss through mental health services, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic. Along with training for staff on accessible communications, these include a specific workstream on sensory loss as part of the Scottish Government's transition plan for mental health services and auditing all future policies and services to ensure they are accessible for people with sensory loss.

Each charity has now met with the Scottish Government to discuss how the issues identified in their report can be addressed. They will continue to work together over the course of the newly elected parliament to make the case for the recommendations they have set out for sensory literate mental health services. The charities believe that the incorporation of the United Convention of the Rights of Disabled Persons into Scots Law also has an important role to play in ensuring the right priority given to the provision of accessible communications throughout mental health services.

Speaking on behalf of the charities, Isabella Goldie, Chief Executive of Deafblind Scotland said:

"The impact of sensory loss is not only on physical health, but also on mental health and wellbeing. It is vital more people receive the support they need to cope with the emotional impact of sight loss, hearing loss and dual sensory loss. The experience of the pandemic has been particularly challenging for people with sensory loss. Many have had services withdrawn, faced additional problems with communication and language issues, and found physical distancing challenging or impossible. As a result, many people with sensory loss have become increasingly isolated."

The report is available in all accessible formats and more information can be found on the Alliance website at: [www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/resources/mental-health-scotland-transition-and-recovery-report/](http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/resources/mental-health-scotland-transition-and-recovery-report/)

# Support

## Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD)



We all need help to understand things when our circumstances and the world in which we live in changes. We need to be informed if we are to have choice and control as independent and active citizens. When the world changes dramatically, as it has during the ongoing pandemic, then the need to provide accessible and understandable information is greater than ever.

In our engagement with people with learning disabilities during the pandemic, they stressed that there was a lack of accessible information about the changes that were taking place. This helped to reinforce the sense of alarm and isolation that

many individuals felt and experienced. So many of us felt bewildered and sometimes afraid... Now imagine how individuals whose communication needs mean they can struggle to absorb new information and new ways of doing things must have felt.

Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD), has helped to support the Scottish Government in developing Easy Read resources to try and make the new guidance and announcements more accessible for people with learning disabilities. We also co-produced a series of guided self-help booklets developed for people with mild to moderate learning/intellectual disabilities designed by academics and combined these with other resources to form a hub of accessible information.

In March 2020 SCLD set up a Facebook group – ‘SCLD stay in touch’ to help us stay connected to the people with learning disabilities who we work with. The group now has over 160 members and has been a key touchstone in helping us communicate key information about COVID-19 and the pandemic, as well as providing a means of social interaction for members.

# Support

## >>> Article Continues...

Digital has been key in our response, however, it is important to recognise that the information itself should not just be accessible, but the places where it is stored must be accessible for all of our citizens. Digital exclusion means that web resources are not appropriate for everyone; we helped distribute 12,555 paper versions of the guided self-help booklets to people and organisations across Scotland during the past year, showing the demand for hard copy information.



It is also important that accessible information is developed as soon as possible to support any significant policy announcements. One of the challenges SCLD has faced during the pandemic is keeping our information as up-to-date as possible in an ever-changing climate. However, through working with partners such as People First (Scotland) and NHS Inform we have strived to achieve this as much as possible. Organisations interested in developing easy read resources should consult the outstanding Easy Read service offered by Disability Equality Scotland: [www.easyread.scot](http://www.easyread.scot)

Ultimately, an important lesson to learn during the pandemic is that accessible information is not just about being in a crisis. We can all avoid unnecessary jargon and nebulous language. Making ideas and ways of working easier to understand, doesn't just help people with learning disabilities, but can make things easier and fairer for everyone.

For more information, visit the SCLD website: [www.sclد.org.uk](http://www.sclد.org.uk)

# Support

## OneBanks



OneBanks

Community impact is high on the agenda when it comes to the bank branch closure debate. While the pandemic has accelerated the growth of online banking, physical branches offer essential banking services to many groups – including the elderly and unbanked, who typically rely more on cash, and those who simply prefer to bank in person. Trade body UK Finance maintains that an estimated 2.1 million people still mainly use cash day-to-day.

A solution is OneBanks, a new banking platform that is complementary to the banks, giving customers access to any of their own accounts. Its first kiosk in Denny is a town that has had no bank for two years; the aim is to prioritise locations with limited or no bank services.

In a refreshing move for a startup, OneBanks not only considers the needs of the community but has baked in accessibility as a priority and core principle to its kiosk design. OneBanks bridges the digital divide and while this is important for all customers, it's especially critical to address diversity, equality and inclusivity. OneBanks utilises open banking and QR code authentication to give customers access to their existing bank accounts via a mobile app and access to cash through the OneBanks iPad and ATM.

From a communications standpoint, staff hired locally from the community help to bring the human-factor back to banking. Providing hands-on support, they're well placed to help customers sign up to or use online banking; create an email address or onboard to the OneBanks app; and access self-serve or over-the-counter cash withdrawal and deposit facilities. Staff can walk customers through all the options at the kiosk; contact the customer's bank with any problems; and advise on cardless technology.

The kiosks and all machinery are fitted with hearing loops. Additionally, SignLive is loaded on the kiosk iPad, connecting OneBanks staff to customers with a live video sign language interpreting service. The iPads are fully detachable and adjustable for seamless onboarding – self-serve or operated with assistance ATM for depositing or withdrawing cash. Digital screens are used to communicate OneBanks messaging or customer information.

# Support

## >>> Article Continues...

Counters are positioned at varying heights to accommodate wheelchair users while wide aisles and clear areas allow for comfortable access. Seating is provided for carer or customer ease; and task and ambient lighting have also been considered.



Tackling the passwords conundrum - which are either too easy to hack, or too hard to remember – OneBanks uses a simple but secure QR code system for verification to deposit or withdraw cash.

By locating kiosks in retail outlets, OneBanks is able to provide a bespoke design and also able to operate more flexible opening hours, offering unprecedented convenience to individuals and businesses. OneBanks has a suite of kiosks for different retail scenarios, with its Denny kiosk in Co-Operative currently the largest.

Prior to launch, local businessman Russell Kirk, Butcher at George Kirk & Sons agreed, "It would be great for the community, especially for the old folk so they don't need to travel." While local florist Hugh Kelly added, "It's going to be beneficial for shopkeepers in the town because we really need somewhere where we can bank. There's still a lot of people using cash."

Duncan Cockburn, founder and CEO of OneBanks commented: "Open banking was meant to unlock new opportunities for the financial ecosystem. In the process, we left behind part of our society due to restricted accessibility. We see a real opportunity to help customers access their bank accounts, on their own terms, via our OneBanks kiosks; and for banks to benefit."

OneBanks provides an accessible catalyst for change benefitting local communities. It plans to roll out kiosks nationally through 2021. Find out more at: [www.onebanks.co.uk](http://www.onebanks.co.uk)

# Your Say on Disability

Your Say on Disability - [www.yoursayondisability.scot](http://www.yoursayondisability.scot)

## Gathering the views of disabled people in Scotland



**Your  
Say On  
Disability**

The Your Say on Disability website is a place for you to tell us your views on disability issues in Scotland. This website provides the opportunity for disabled people to help shape Scotland's future in accessibility and equality.

As someone with lived experience of – or representing someone with – a disability, we would like you to tell us what you feel is working and what needs to change in Scotland, by completing our surveys. Our surveys are on current policy consultations and are available in alternative formats.

## Weekly Poll

The Weekly Poll will allow you to have your say on a number of different topics affecting disabled people in Scotland. The poll is a simple yes/no question that will be published each week, along with the opportunity to leave a comment on the chosen topic.

## BSL Videos

We have used our YouTube Channel to upload weekly poll questions in British Sign Language (BSL): [www.yoursayondisability.scot/bsl-videos](http://www.yoursayondisability.scot/bsl-videos). Please provide feedback on our BSL questions which will help us to increase the accessibility of our Weekly Poll format.

## What happens to my comments?

- Your comments will be passed on in full to those who have requested the survey, making sure that your views really are counted.
- Your responses are anonymous unless you wish to give your details.
- The Scottish Government and other bodies want to know what is working, what is not and what needs to happen to improve life for Scottish disabled people, so your comments can really make a difference!

# Your Say on Disability

## Weekly Poll Roundup

Each week we send a poll question to our members so that we can create a better understanding of the issues affecting disabled people. We also want to gather more evidence that we can use in our business planning and to help respond to consultations. The Weekly Poll has proved invaluable in gaining insight from disabled people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The comments we received from our members helped to inform policy and guidance produced by the Scottish Government. The following is a selection of the Weekly Poll responses.



### COVID-19: Vaccine Rollout (Week Beginning 15 February)

**Question:** Are you satisfied with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in Scotland so far?

**Your feedback:** Yes - 51% (85 respondents) No 49% (82 respondents)

**Your comments:** “I think the programme is going well. My local GP surgery has been very efficient in communication and giving vaccines. Slick system. Access is good.”

“Unpaid carers have once again been overlooked even though they have provided lifelines services and filled the gaps when other services have been withdrawn. Unpaid carers have not stopped, and many provide care 24/7. No respite at all since March 2020.”

### COVID-19: Vaccine Passports (Week Beginning 1 March)

**Question:** Should vaccine passports be introduced in Scotland?

**Your feedback:** Yes – 57% (89 respondents) No – 43% (66 respondents)

**Your comments:** “A carefully thought-out system could help us keep our lives as normal as possible instead of swinging from lockdown to lockdown.”

# Your Say on Disability

## >>> Responses Continued...

“I have autoimmune disease so it is unlikely I’ll be able to get the vaccine any time soon. This is an immensely discriminatory practice with wide reaching consequences for disabled people.”

### **Public Appointments (Week Beginning 12 April)**

**Question:** Would you consider applying for a public appointment?

**Your feedback:** Yes - 92% (276 respondents) No – 8% (25 respondents)

**Your comments:** “If we want to get future designs and policies right and build forward better, then it is critical that disabled people are on these boards to utilise their lived experiences.”

“One of the problems is the earning limit if you are on benefits. This can be prohibitive and leave people losing money and worse off. This needs to be addressed.”

### **Basic Income (Week Beginning 19 April)**

**Question:** Do you think disabled people in Scotland would benefit from the introduction of a Basic Income?

**Your feedback:** Yes - 92% (377 respondents) No – 8% (31 respondents)

**Your comments:** “Most disabled people are in poverty or on the brink of it, and it is the one minority group that you can fall into at any given moment and yet are treated as lower than nothing. A Basic Income is the start of common decency.”

“There is danger that disability benefits could be cut if Basic Income is introduced”

# Your Say on Disability

## Scottish Parliament Election 2021: Disability Hustings

Ahead of this year's Scottish Parliament elections, representatives from the main political parties in Scotland met with our members and the public to discuss a range of topics affecting disabled people. Co-hosted by Disability Equality Scotland and the Health and Social Care Alliance for Scotland (the ALLIANCE), the candidates took questions on a variety of issues including accessibility of public transport, tackling increased stigma, support for unpaid carers and meaningful engagement with Access Panels to improve the accessibility of our local communities. This was a fantastic opportunity to highlight the priorities of disabled people over the next five years and discuss how they should be addressed in the next Parliamentary term.



In addition to journalist Pennie Taylor moderating the event, we were joined by representatives from all major political parties standing for election in May 2021:

- Caron Lindsay, Scottish Liberal Democrat candidate for Almond Valley
- Emma Roddick, Scottish National Party (SNP) candidate for Highlands and Islands
- Gillian Mackay - Scottish Greens candidate for Central Scotland
- Jeremy Balfour - Scottish Conservative and Unionist candidate for Lothian
- Monica Lennon - Scottish Labour candidate for Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse

Thank you to everyone who attended, including those who submitted questions to the candidates about the priorities for disabled people over the next five years.

You can watch the Disability Hustings on our YouTube Channel:

[youtu.be/KyCbVrWIFdQ](https://youtu.be/KyCbVrWIFdQ)

# Your Say on Disability

## Scottish Parliament Election 2021: Emma Roddick MSP



Newly elected disabled MSP Emma Roddick reflects on the ongoing barriers and prejudice that disabled people face on a day-to-day basis.

While I have a lot of interests in terms of areas of policy I'm looking forward to getting stuck into over the next five years – housing, land reform, poverty, rural depopulation – I also take my responsibility to break down some of the barriers I faced. This includes

barriers over selection, campaigning and election for disabled candidates who come after me – to discuss accessibility, opportunity, and dignity for us all.

So far, that's included pointing out a few physical accessibility issues, and lots of explaining about my conditions and how they affect me; raising awareness that not everything is black and white and not all disabilities work in real life like they do on TV. Unfortunately, something is happening which is limiting my and others' ability to discuss policy that will benefit disabled people in Scotland – something sinister which is increasingly becoming seen as acceptable, when it is anything but. Gatekeeping.

It's incredible – and saddening – how many people today are happy to publicly demand medical information from a disabled person in order to decide for themselves whether they're "disabled enough". How many strangers believe they are entitled to know why someone else identifies as disabled, why they're eligible for an early vaccine, or why they don't have to wear a face covering.

I've had many folk – who clearly are unaware of what my disability actually is – tell me it isn't a real one. Others tell me that, because my disability is invisible (it isn't, as it happens, but that's not the point), I shouldn't be taking up space from those who have more obvious disabilities. I've been told I shouldn't use the access emoji because I don't use a wheelchair – something people can understand, unlike other mobility aids, fatigue, and mental illness.

# Your Say on Disability

## >>>Article Continues...

Not all disabled people manage to get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) like I did. Not all use an appliance like mine. Not all manage to get a blue badge – something I've never needed to request. All should be believed and respected. I've been through the DWP's assessments many times, both for myself and on behalf of people I am helping. The process is degrading, dehumanising, and traumatic – hopefully not something we aspire to. Why would we want to emulate it when dealing with other disabled people in everyday life? I'd never demand a PIP letter, list of medications, or medical history from someone else. However, I now get badgered for these daily on Twitter, by email and in person; often as a condition for the person asking to stop harassing me online.

The reason I do not comply – besides simply not wanting to share sensitive information with bullies – is that I have a responsibility now, as a disabled MSP, not to normalise the need to share private information, forcing this unreasonable expectation on those who come after me. There's a wider problem here, too. Reducing people to a set of symptoms undermines our collective ability to understand the very individual challenges faced by disabled people. Ableism is rife across the board, but it's a particularly popular cause in Scottish politics at the moment. I've seen people list symptoms of one or more of my conditions in order to somehow prove a lack of suitability for public life. I work hard – certainly harder than I'd have to work if I were not disabled. The same goes for most disabled people I know in the workplace. But that's not our fault – that's the fault of the workplace and societal expectations.

Regardless, nobody should be reduced solely to a disability or set of symptoms they may not even have. Encouraging people to rank conditions as more important or serious than others, rather than talking about someone's ability to live the life they want has been altered – following the social model of disability – is unhelpful. No disability affects everybody the same way. Finances, geographical location, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, support network, choice of career or education, collection and intensity of symptoms, and so many other factors create a unique set of circumstances and mean that no two experiences are identical. It's difficult enough for us to get simple adjustments made – whether it's a specific type of chair, comfort breaks, or, in my case, not having to stand up to speak in debates – to environments and procedures designed to cater to able-bodied, neurotypical people as it is. Let's not make it harder for each other, too.

# Your Say on Disability

## Webinar: Journey Planning, 24 May 2021



Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions we have continued to deliver our events through a series of online webinars. On 24 May 2021, we hosted a webinar in partnership with Transport Scotland about the information that disabled people need to plan an accessible journey and to hear their experiences of using the Traveline Scotland website.

Our Operations Manager, Emma Scott set the context for the day and was joined by panellists from Transport Scotland and Traveline Scotland. In a first for our webinars, we moved into virtual breakout rooms, which allowed our members to share their own experiences of journey planning and using Traveline Scotland.

It was striking from discussions just how much planning and preparation disabled people undertake in advance of making a journey, and how much this process relies on up-to-date information, in a format that is accessible. Audio announcements are useful for some, while others need visual updates, perhaps via SMS text message. This was particularly true when things change on a journey through delays or disruption. It was suggested that when planning a journey, disabled passengers should be able to specify whether they require assistance, the type of assistance they need and at what point on their journey.

There were mixed views among respondents on their perception of Traveline Scotland. Some had used it and struggled to get the information they needed. Wheelchair users were frustrated that there was no option to indicate they were a wheelchair user and therefore all the information presented to them referred to 'walking distances' rather than 'wheeling distances'. There was a perception that there was a time-lag with travel updates appearing on Traveline Scotland, whereas the operator sites were likely to be more up-to-date. It was clear that disabled people appreciate being involved in discussions and would like to continue to be consulted by Traveline Scotland.

View the webinar on our YouTube Channel: [youtu.be/3e8aUnb1QoE](https://youtu.be/3e8aUnb1QoE)

# Your Say on Disability

## Webinar: Access to Public Appointments, 3 June 2021

We worked in partnership with the Scottish Government to host a webinar about access to public appointments on 3 June 2021. Public bodies seek to promote, deliver, fund and scrutinise public services, or they provide impartial expert advice to Ministers, the Parliament, and other organisations.



Statistics show that disabled people are significantly under-represented on public body Boards in Scotland. The purpose of the webinar was to allow our members to share their views on what measures can be taken to increase the number of disabled people on the board of a public body. Our Operations Manager Emma Scott was joined by Robert Boyter from the Public Appointments Team at the Scottish Government and Marsali Craig, a public appointee on the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS).

During breakout discussions, there was a consensus that there is not enough easily accessible information about public appointments and that disabled people were not necessarily being exposed to advertised opportunities. The application process itself was felt to be cumbersome with long and hefty application forms which were perceived to be weighted more towards academic or professional qualifications than lived experience. It was suggested that at the application stage, more accessible information would be helpful, such as forms in an Easy Read or plain English format.

There are potential implications for those taking up public appointments who are in receipt of benefits from the Department of Work and Pensions and/or Social Security Scotland which need to be taken into consideration. The general consensus among disabled participants was that their contributions on a public body should be valued and therefore they should not be financially penalised and lose out on any benefits.

View the webinar on our YouTube Channel: [youtu.be/BXHZXOmDXwQ](https://youtu.be/BXHZXOmDXwQ)

# Access Panel Network



**Access  
Panel  
Network**

## **Access Panels**

We are the umbrella organisation for all disability Access Panels in Scotland, providing them with support and guidance to improve the lives of disabled people at a local level throughout Scotland.

### **What is an Access Panel?**

Access Panels can be found in all regions and are made up of groups of disabled volunteers who work together to improve physical access and wider social inclusion in their local communities. We offer support and training opportunities to help them operate efficiently, link together as a network and learn from each other.

### **Get Involved!**

Joining your local Access Panel is easy and a great way to help improve accessibility in your community. You can learn new skills, help with promotional campaigns, give support at events or help with research and publicity. Give the time and commitment with which you feel comfortable and help to make a difference in your community.

To find out more about the Access Panel Network and how to join your local Access Panel contact us:

Telephone: 0141 370 0968

Email: [access@disabilityequality.scot](mailto:access@disabilityequality.scot)

Website: [www.accesspanel.scot](http://www.accesspanel.scot)



# Access Panel Network

## Access Panel Conference 2021



Our Equality and Access Manager Ian Buchanan reflects on this year's Access Panel Conference 2021.

This year's Access Panel conference was held on Thursday 25 February, and it was a delight to see so many Access Panels and stakeholders in attendance. Departing from our usual format because of Covid regulations, the conference was held entirely online for the first time. We were pleased to see attendance improved compared to previous years and we feel this was reflective of us holding the conference online; there was no need for long travel times or overnight stays, meaning people could log on straightaway and join in the discussion.



The year's keynote speech was delivered by Monica Lennon MSP in her capacity as patron of Disability Equality Scotland. We were so grateful for Monica joining us for this event, expressing her continued commitment to supporting Access Panels and wider access and inclusion for disabled people across Scotland.

Susan Fulton, Inclusive Design Officer at East Ayrshire Council, also joined us and delivered an informative session on the importance of inclusive design in the built environment; and Robin Wickes from Edinburgh Access Panel provided a fantastic update on the work his Panel have been doing on the Spaces for People initiative in Edinburgh to make sure that changes to public space don't further marginalise disabled people.

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# Access Panel Network

## >>> Article continues...

Our post-conference survey was enlightening, with overwhelmingly positive feedback about our first virtual conference. 95% of attendees reported finding it very easy or easy to participate in the event, and a majority of respondents told us they would like the conference to be delivered online again, as if it had been a physical conference they would not have been able to attend. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that Panel members feel more confident and included online, as per our pledge statement to the Digital Participation Charter, to make sure no one is left behind.

This opportunity for Access Panels, partners and stakeholders to engage with one another is crucial to everyone's work in promoting accessibility, and Disability Equality Scotland will continue our work to facilitate this in future.

As always it was a pleasure to be a part of the Access Panel Conference and to see so many people who are committed to making Scotland a more accessible place to live, work, and visit. I am immensely proud to be involved in a network as special and as unique as this. I wish to extend my thanks to all the Access Panels and stakeholders for taking the time to attend. I hope you enjoyed the day as much as I did, and I am looking forward to meeting with you all again very soon.



# Access Panel Network

## Access Panel News



**Access  
Panel  
Network**

The following pages provide an insight into the activities and hard work volunteers put into their local Access Panels. If you are not yet a member with your local Access Panel and would like to get involved in improving access in your local community, contact your local Access Panel today.

Contact details of each Access Panel can be found at [www.accesspanel.scot/map-access-panels](http://www.accesspanel.scot/map-access-panels) or contact Ian Buchanan telephone: 0141 370 0968 or email: [access@disabilityequality.scot](mailto:access@disabilityequality.scot)

### Central Aberdeenshire Access Panel

Email: [centralaccesspanel@googlemail.com](mailto:centralaccesspanel@googlemail.com)

#### Central Aberdeenshire Access Panel

Promoting access for all

This year, the Central Aberdeenshire Access Panel have used the Access Panel Grant to fund a site visit to Kintore

Railway Station. We had been invited to look at access in the new station just before it's official opening, and feedback to the operators. We also used the grant to fund IT equipment and software for our member who looks after our social media presence.

We are in contact with Inverurie Academy as we wish to carry out an access visit to this new school which has community facilities. This visit was put on hold due to the pandemic, but we continue to request permission to visit as soon as we are permitted. We continue to take an interest in the development of Insch Station, to ensure access issues are addressed.

We have continued to meet using Zoom during 2020 and 2021, and have scrutinised plans submitted to the Council for approval; where necessary communicating our findings and recommendations. Zoom has also allowed us to talk to the Barra Access Panel about the issues they face, as well as taking part in the Disability Hustings, asking pertinent questions of the politicians taking part in advance of the election.

# Access Panel Network

## Stirling Area Access Panel

Telephone: 01786 237960 | Email: rh.dick@btinternet.com

Stirling Area Access Panel (SAAP) have used the Access Panel Grant to purchase essential standards on accessibility into buildings, and also maintain our IT System and Website to provide up-to-date information for the public on our activities.

Our activities have included working with Active Stirling for over two years to get them to change a door and step into the Steam Room of The Peak Sports Centre to make this facility accessible to wheelchair users. We have persuaded two developers of Glamping Pods in the area to make one of each of their Pods and grounds to have accessible features built into the entrance and toilets, improving accessible tourism in the area.



We wrote to our local MSP Dean Lockhart during the first Lockdown to ask about opening public toilets, and this was raised in the Scottish Parliament.

Through signposting from Disability Equality Scotland, we have enjoyed the Podcasts which the National Register of Access Consultants have run, particularly on the proposed changes to Changing Places toilets and simplifying the complexity of streetscape changes for cyclists through participating in Active Travel projects.

Our Panel recently raised concerns about the closure of Stirling Shopmobility, a vital local service which provided scooters and wheelchairs for Stirling city shoppers with reduced mobility. It is an absolute disgrace for Stirling that funding is not being made available by the council to continue the service, which is valued by disabled tourists and visitors, as well as its Stirlingshire residents. This will exclude many from freedoms so many people take for granted. The Panel will continue to raise awareness of why funds must be made available to save a well-used community resource.

# Access Panel Network

**Centre for Inclusive Living Perth and Kinross**  
Telephone: 01738 587282 | Email: [info@cilpk.org.uk](mailto:info@cilpk.org.uk)



Firstly, some good news – Gillian, our Manager who left in October for Maternity leave gave birth to a beautiful, healthy baby girl. We welcomed Jane Moncrieff, who is Gillian's Maternity Leave replacement and is doing a wonderful job so far with CILPK. Jane has fit in nicely considering the limitations on ours and other Disabled People Organisation's at present.

There have been celebrations over the Year, while acknowledging how difficult it has been. While in lockdown and when our service was unable to run as usual, there has been more opportunity to phone or contact members and get to know them on a deeper level than usual. Ordinarily, we would see each other at meetings, but have less of an opportunity to speak on a more personal level. Members have said that they hugely appreciated the support they received during these immensely difficult times and the increased communication.

We have appreciated the incredible strength and resilience of our members when facing such difficult times, which reminds us of the daily struggles they faced even before the Pandemic and how they have had to be so strong. How many others now see those difficulties too and realise the impact of social isolation that others have faced long before Coronavirus. We have realised that digital technology is vital in keeping everyone connected, while acknowledging that it is not the answer for everyone, as highlighted by the comment from one of our members: "It's been very difficult to get everyone together this year, and I worry that people are being left behind while digital inclusion is being celebrated. There are some people who can't read, don't have the best comprehension or manual dexterity to operate digital devices and lots of people who do not have internet access."

There has been increased opportunity to meet with local authority, other organisations and decision makers, where usually, busy lives would mean less opportunity to meet. We still have a long way to go, but we hope that lessons have been learned throughout all of this and that we keep some of the incredible community spirit we have seen through the Pandemic.

# Access Panel Network

**Oban Access Panel**  
**Email: [obanaccesspanel@aol.com](mailto:obanaccesspanel@aol.com)**

Oban and District Access Panel has used the Access Panel Grant for costs associated with third sector compliance, for example changes to constitution with OSCR. We also used some of the grant to cover costs of video conferencing, which has allowed us to significantly increase the amount of geographical area we can cover in bringing on and interacting with members. This has also been vital in allowing the Panel to meet during lockdown. We've also been able to complete and begin to distribute an informational pamphlet.



In terms of our partnerships, we have achieved good integration with BID4Oban, the umbrella organisation for all businesses in town. In fact, the new Panel director is the CEO of BID4Oban. We have also been actively engaged with HiTrans regarding the possibility of a new passenger transport terminal for road, rail and ferry in Oban. We continue to work closely with the Argyll and Bute Council in provision of improved infrastructure, and have improved our relationships with the Community Development Team with a view to widening our influence, and have also improved our relationships with the Planning Commission. We have liaised with members of the Council on a variety of issues, all of which have received fulsome support. We additionally won the support of Conservative MSPs to support the need for statutory consultee status of Panels.

We are engaged in ongoing discussions with Disability Equality Scotland and Sight Scotland regarding a campaign for Braille labelling on consumer products. Additionally, as a result of attending the Argyll and Bute Lorn and the Isles Committee planning meeting, the Panel has made an inroad to the local high school to increase our engagement with young people. Furthermore, we hope to progress a minor but significant improvement for pedestrian access between the rail and ferry interchange in Oban. Due to our access to Zoom, representatives of the Panel have been able to attend the Disability Equality Scotland AGM, and online training sessions provided by the local authority, which we've very much benefited from.

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