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Call for evidence – Open call response

What are the main challenges and opportunities for health and wellbeing, and how have these changed, or not, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

We have interviewed 60 disabled people and 20 infrastructure organisations (disabled peoples organisations, voluntary organisations, statutory organisations). We are hearing about failure to consider disabled people in pandemic response (accessibility of communications); additional health risks (e.g. mental health, postponement of rehabilitation); additional exclusion (for example, disabled children from online learning, disabled adults from online shopping); great efforts by voluntary sector (for example, buying members tablet computers). Social care packages have been cancelled in thousands of cases in our research settings.

What are the main challenges and opportunities for communities, culture and belonging, and how have these changed, or not, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Some disabled people are very concerned about being seen as 'vulnerable' in messaging; yet they have not been included in response. Disabled people often feel very excluded. Disabled people's organisations have stepped up, gone online, and made valiant efforts to support their people - e.g. The Staying Inn initiative.

What are the main challenges and opportunities for knowledge, skills and employment, and how have these changed, or not, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

There are benefits to disabled students and workers from going online, because they no longer have to struggle with inaccessible commutes or buildings or environments. However, there are risks of further isolation and exclusion.

What are the acute (one – two years) challenges and opportunities to consider and what are the longer-term ones (two –10 years)?

Acute: in future, pandemic response - communications and other measures - have to be inclusive of all disabled people. PPE has to be provided for social care sector. Social services have to respond better to all disabled people. Longer-term: online has to be a choice for all, not the only response to some. Social care has to be given adequate weight alongside health. The inequalities in society between disabled and non-disabled people have to be understood and rectified.

What is not covered above that you think should also be considered?

Accessibility - of information and environments.

To which of the following policy areas does your evidence relate?

Health and wellbeing

To which of the following cross-cutting themes does your research relate?

Inequalities