



The Coronavirus law, treating disabled people unfairly?

A report from Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee



EasyRead version of
Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access
to services: interim Report on temporary provisions
in the Coronavirus Act

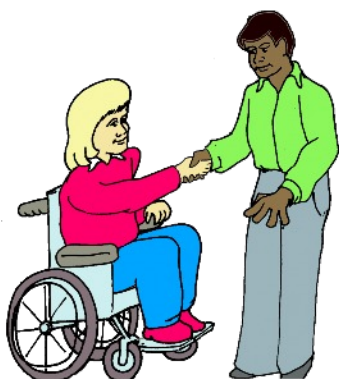
About this paper



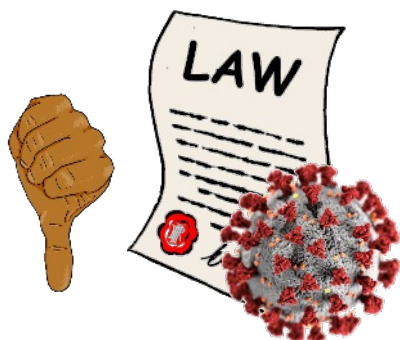
The Women and Equalities Committee wrote this paper.



We are a group of MPs from different parties. We work together to make sure the Government keep to the Equality Act.



Equality means everyone having the same chances to do things. Some people might need extra help to get the same chances.



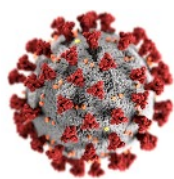
We looked to see if the Coronavirus law treats disabled people unfairly.



This is an EasyRead version of our report.

The full version can be seen here:
<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/328/women-and-equalities-committee/>

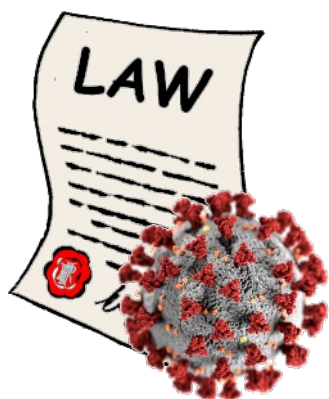
The coronavirus law



Coronavirus meant we had to do lots of things differently.

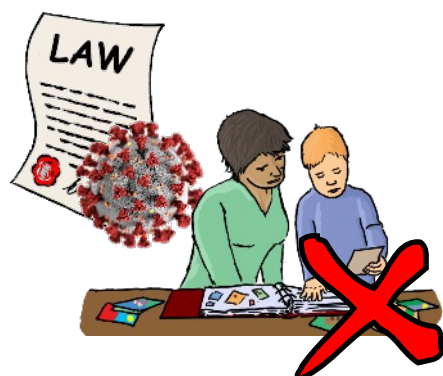


The Government decided we all had to do some things to keep safe and stop it spreading, like the lockdown and closing schools.

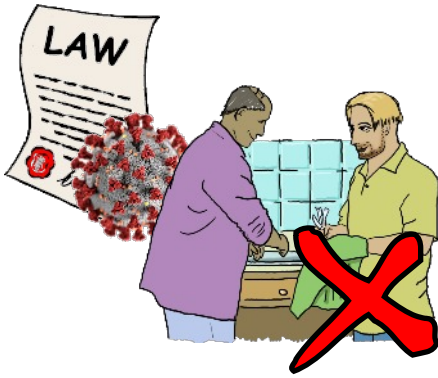


They passed a law to allow these things to be done.

This law takes away some rights disabled people fought hard to get, for example:



- children with learning disabilities, who were thought could not go to school, now go with teachers meeting their needs



- people, who were thought had to live in institutions, now have support to live independently.

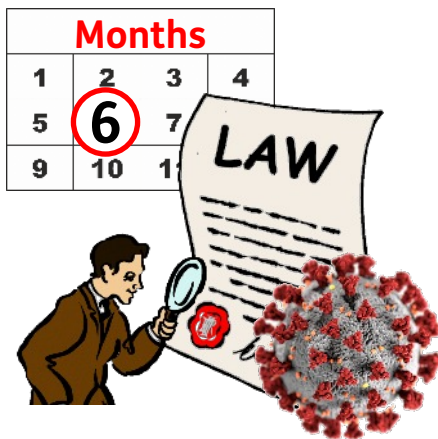


These rights are precious because they affect how people live, work and play.

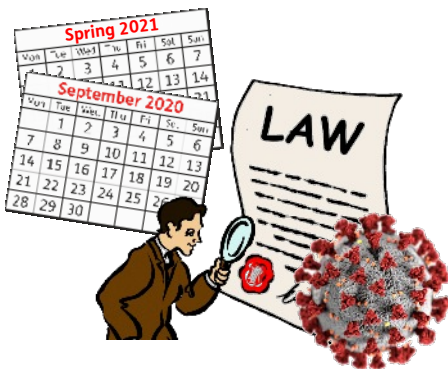


Disabled people and others need them back as soon as possible. They must not stay in law any longer than absolutely necessary.

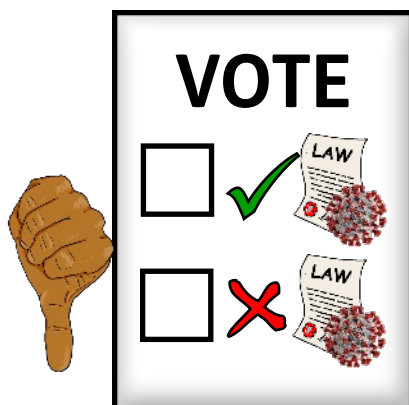
Checking if we still need the law



The Coronavirus law needs to go back to parliament every 6 months to be looked at to see if we still need the powers in it.



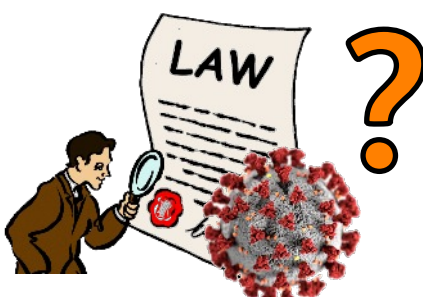
The first time will be at the end of September 2020 and then again in Spring 2021.



We think it is not good enough to have a simple vote saying

Yes - we still need the law, or

No - we do not need it any longer.



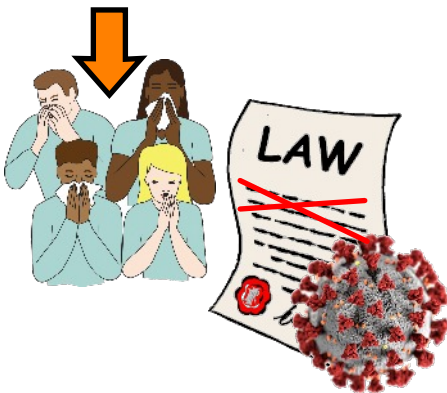
We think MPs should to be able to look at parts of the law, to see if those parts are still needed.



This is especially important for the rights of disabled people to be treated equally and fairly.



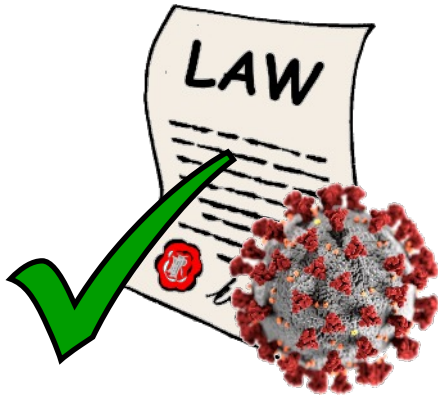
We are now, after the summer, seeing more people catch coronavirus again.



If less people had been catching it, we would say the parts of the law on care and support for disabled people should be dropped.



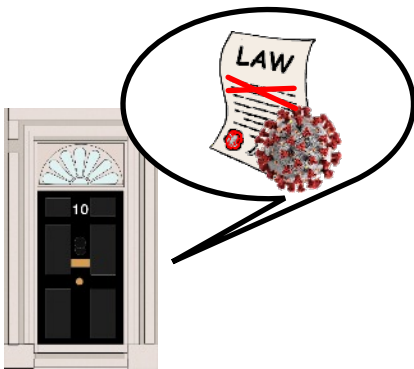
But things are getting worse, and when they get worse social care and support is most at risk.



So we agree some parts of the law need to stay for the time being.



But we should check all the time to see if they are still needed.



And if they are not needed the Government should promise they will drop them as quickly as possible, even if this is before they are looked at again in Spring 2021.

What needs to be done

1. Print the Think Local Act Personal report



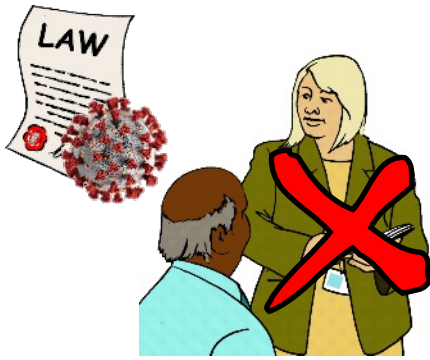
Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) is a group of organisations supporting better health and social care for people who need support.



They have written a report on how coronavirus has affected social care for people.



We think it is important for MPs and others to be able to see this report so we can talk about it when we look at the law this September.



2. Make councils tell government when they use the law

Under the law councils can change or not provide some services if they need to.

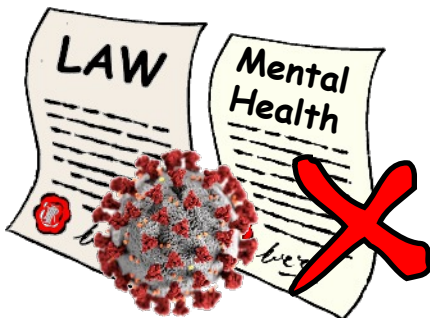


We think Government should make it a rule that councils must show why the changes are really needed.

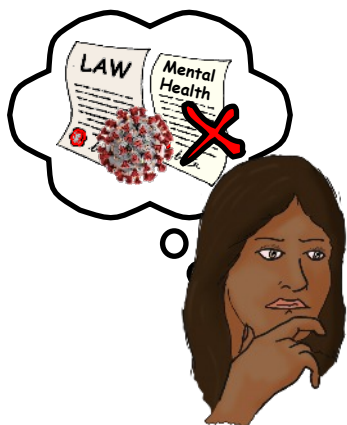


They should be told that, if they make any changes that are not needed, they might end up in court.

3. Drop parts of the law not needed



The parts of the coronavirus law about Mental Health have not been needed in England. They make it easier for doctors to make people who are mentally ill stay in hospital. They also allow doctors to keep them there for longer.



But people do not think these changes to the law will ever be needed.



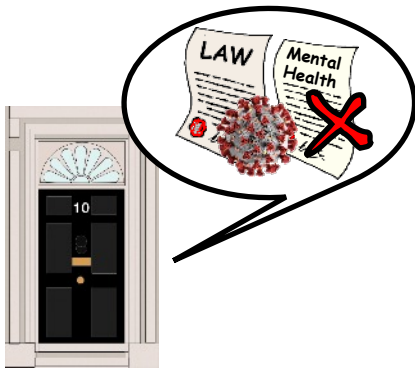
These parts of law go against so many of the new changes to Mental Health law. The changes were to urgently stop people being treated unequally and unfairly.



We think the Government should drop these parts of the coronavirus law straight away.



If they cannot drop them, they should put them on hold until they might be needed.



If they are not needed the Government should promise they will drop them as quickly as possible, even if this is before they are looked at again in Spring 2021.

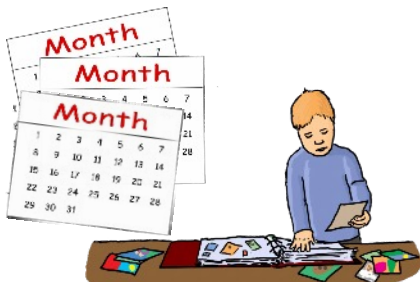
4. Education support



We know councils needed to be able to do some things differently for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who needed support.



The law said councils had to use reasonable endeavours. This meant they could do some things like supporting children and young people with SEND less.



So many children and young people with SEND had very little or no support for three months.

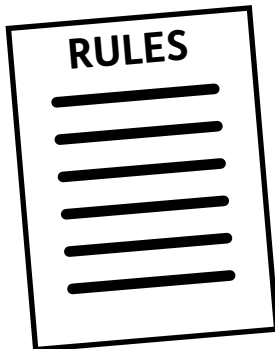
July 2020						
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This was changed at the end of July 2020 and support brought back. We think it could have been changed earlier.



We think the Department for Education should look at how they make decisions to see if they could be made faster.



5. If councils need to use reasonable endeavours to stop services again

The Government should make much clearer rules for councils about what reasonable endeavours means:



- it must not be used as an excuse to drop everything and do nothing to support children and young people



- they should say what support must still be provided



- they should give some examples of how well some councils have managed.



The Government should make a clear plan about how to catch up on all the work and assessments that have not been done. And how to do the urgent ones first.



We are seeing some rules just for areas that have lots of people with coronavirus. We think that should be the same for councils wanting to use reasonable endeavours, it should only happen in those areas badly affected and not all over the country.

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