



The Women and Equalities Committee

Government's response to the committee's recommendations on the National Disability Strategy



EasyRead version

Background



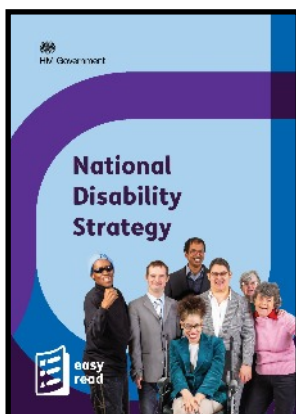
In 2021 we launched the UK Disability Survey.



Thousands of people filled in the survey including disabled people, families and carers.



We also had meetings with disabled people and their organisations, parents, carers, charities, academics, think-tanks and businesses.



Then we published our National Disability Strategy.

Sometimes we say 'the Strategy'.



The Strategy explains:

- how we want the lives of disabled people to improve



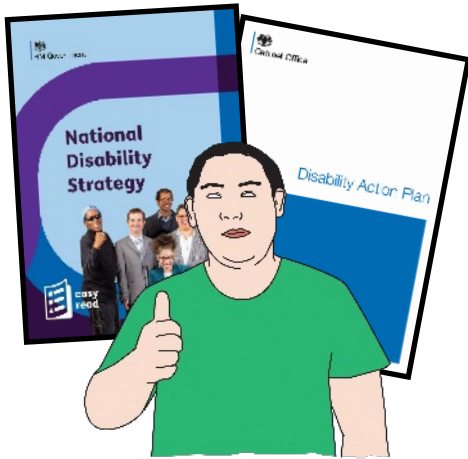
- what the different parts of Government will do to improve the lives of disabled people



- how we can encourage other people to do things that will improve the lives of disabled people



- what we will do to follow the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in our laws and services.



The National Disability Strategy and the new Disability Action Plan show how we want to improve the lives of disabled people now and into the future.

Why we wrote this response



In 2023 the Women and Equalities Committee checked the National Disability Strategy.

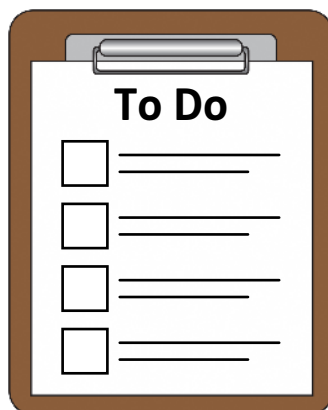


The Women and Equalities Committee checks Government policy, plans and spending about treating people equally.



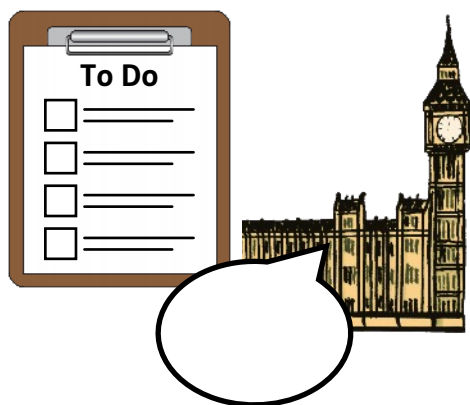
The committee wrote a report to us.

We are grateful for the committee's feedback.



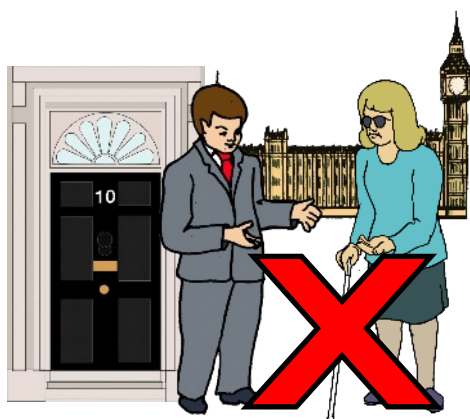
In their report the committee made some **recommendations** for change.

Recommendations are suggestions.

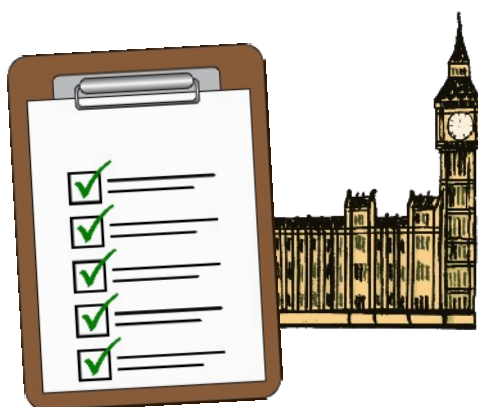


Here are the committee's recommendations and our replies.

Women and Equalities Committee recommendation about the Strategy



The committee told us disabled people and their organisations said the Government did not talk to disabled people properly about the Strategy.



The committee said the Strategy mainly lists what Government departments are doing already. It does not show how departments can work with each other on behalf of disabled people.

Our reply



We spoke to and met with disabled people, their organisations and disability charities to make the Strategy.

Meetings:



- 42 meetings of the 9 Regional Stakeholder Networks with 225 disabled people, their organisations, parents and carers



- 10 meetings with the Disability Charities Consortium, a coalition of the UK's largest disability charities:

- Leonard Cheshire Disability
- Mencap
- Mind
- RNIB
- RNID
- National Autistic Society
- Scope
- Sense
- Business Disability Forum



- 4 meetings with the Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) Forum, which represented 14 DPOs across England.

Roundtable discussions:



- 11 roundtable discussions with a total of 98 disabled people about their experiences in daily life



- 6 roundtable discussions on specific topics with 130 attendees including disabled people, DPOs, charities, academia and think tanks.

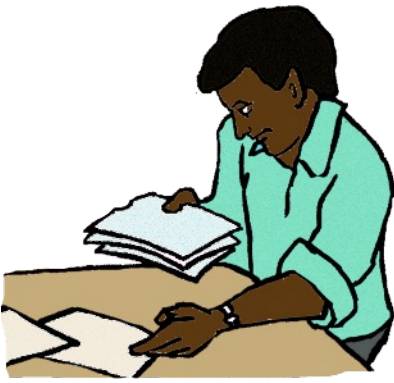


We also looked at **evidence** about barriers faced by disabled people.

Evidence is information that explains why something is true.



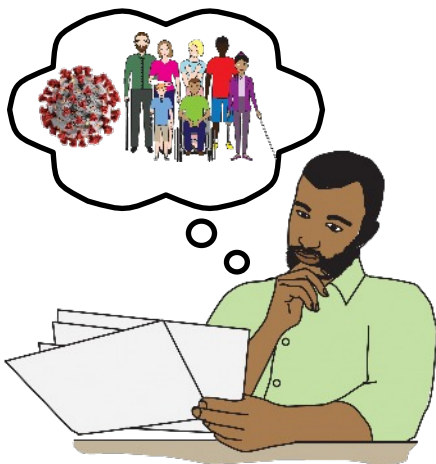
We collected information from the 14,000 disabled people who filled out the UK Disability Survey.



We looked at research ordered by the Disability Unit (DU).



We collected information from all Government departments.

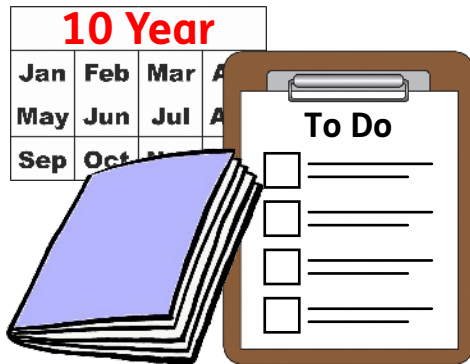


The evidence helped us understand more about the daily lives of disabled people - before and during the COVID-19 lockdown.



We will keep monitoring and reporting on how the Strategy is being delivered.

Women and Equalities Committee recommendation for a longer-term approach



The committee thinks the Strategy is too short.

It needs to be a 10-year plan that shows targets for the first 5 years.



They think the Disability Unit should have the final say about policy made by all Government departments, so all departments are working towards the same goals.

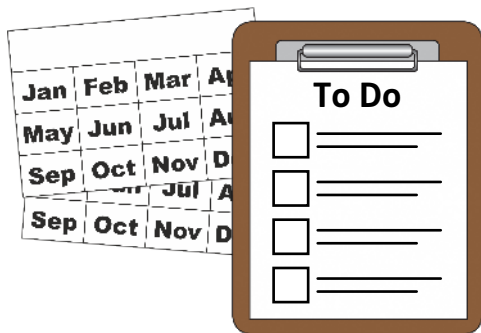
Our reply

How long the Strategy will last

The new Disability Action Plan sets out the immediate actions we will take in 2024 to:

- improve disabled people's lives, and





- set things up for longer term change.



The Government plans to deliver improvements to disabled people's lives until the end of this Parliament.



Making sure all departments look after the needs of disabled people

The public sector equality duty says every Government department must think of the needs of disabled people in their policies and work.

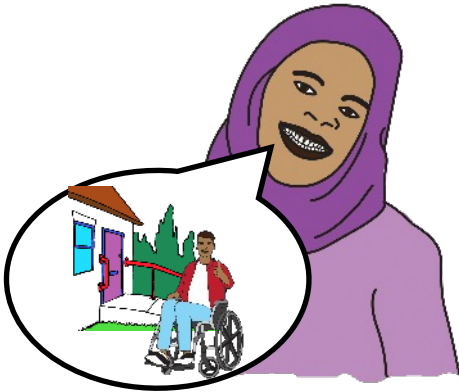


We do not think the Disability Unit should have the final say because:

- Government departments share this responsibility



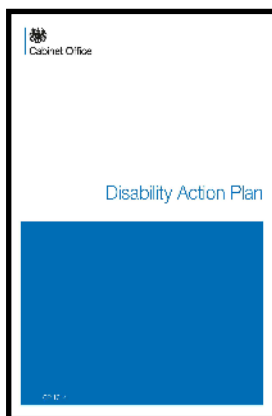
- the Disability Unit already guides Government



- every Government department has a Ministerial Disability Champion to speak up for accessibility and opportunity for disabled people.

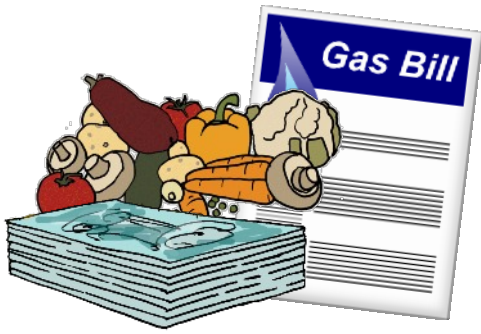


The Ministerial Disability Champions meet regularly.



The Ministerial Disability Champions have met to talk about:

- the Disability Action Plan



- the impact of the cost of living on disabled people



- areas where departments can work together better



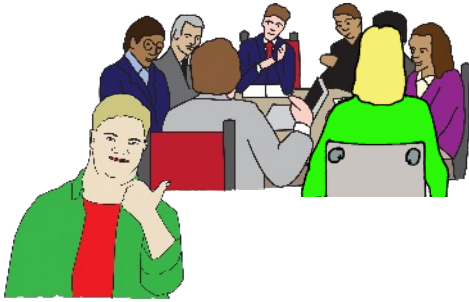
- housing and accessible transport.

Women and Equalities Committee recommendation about engagement with disabled people



The committee said we need a national group to give the Government good information about the needs of disabled people.

This group should be made up of disabled people's organisations and other networks.



The group can work with the Government to make things better for disabled people.



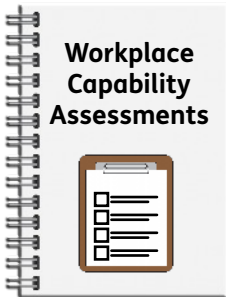
Our reply

The Disability Unit already ensures that people from the disability sector are listened to.



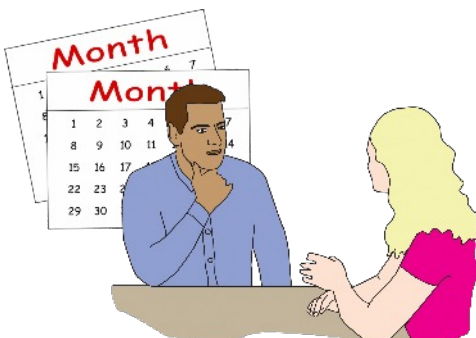
The unit talks to disabled people and their communities and organisations, charities, and business leaders.

The Disability Unit regularly links with 4 groups:



1. Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) Forum England. Examples of their work are:

- the Retained EU Law Act
- The Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) consultation on Workplace Capability Assessments
- the Government's #AskDontAssume campaign
- The Department for Health and Social Care's Care and Support statutory guidance.



2. Regional Stakeholder Network (RSN)

Each RSN Chair meets with a Disability Unit official every six weeks.



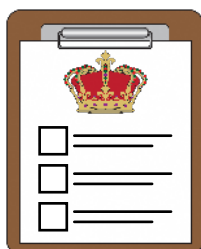
All the Chairs meet the Disability Unit monthly.



The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work meets RSN Chairs every 3 months.



Their meetings help them understand regional issues facing disabled people across England and connect RSN Chairs to other departments.



Examples of their work are:

- accessibility assessment of King Charles III's Coronation



- #AskDontAssume campaign



- the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)



- DWP's Autism Employment Review.



3. The Disability Charities Consortium (DCC)

DCC organisations help Government officials develop policy.



The Disability Unit meets with the DCC monthly.



4. Disability and Access Ambassadors (DAAs)

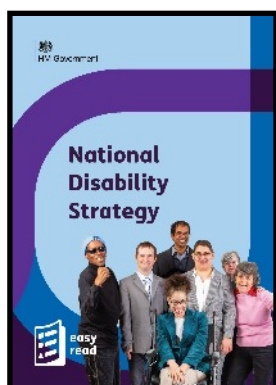
DAAs are senior business leaders from 19 different business areas.



They encourage improvements in the accessibility and quality of services and facilities in their sector for disabled people.



DAA's meet the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work every 3 months.



All these groups were invited to take part in the Disability Action Plan consultation.



Over that 12-week period, the Disability Unit invited 140 stakeholders to 25 events.



Ministers and officials visit and talk with disabled individuals and groups to make sure that we fully understand the issues affecting disabled people.



The Disability Unit often looks for ways to work with stakeholders.



The Disability Action Plan asks the Disability Unit to set up panels where disabled people can talk about their experience in specific areas and support policy development.



Women and Equalities Committee recommendation about how we are building evidence

The Committee wants the Disability Unit to explain how it will improve the **evidence** base about disability.



They want to see information about disabled people's lived experiences including disabled people with other **protected characteristics**.



People with **protected characteristics** may have to deal with discrimination.

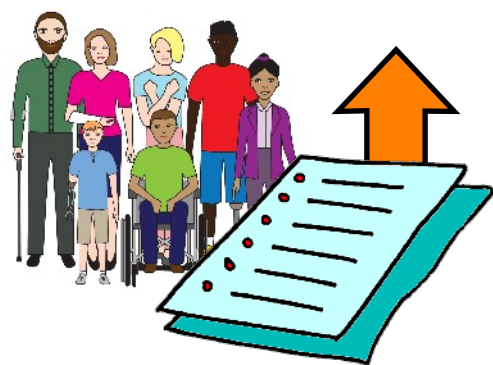


Protected characteristics include age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.



Our reply

The Government is working hard to improve the evidence base on disability.



We know we need more information about disabled people in the UK.



A small team in the Disability Unit is:

- looking for gaps in our data
- working with partners across Government to improve the quality of data they are all collecting. We hope to compare datasets for better information
- building a case for a new national disability survey. A new survey will fill data gaps so we know more about the personal experiences, needs and aspirations of disabled people including disabled people with other protected characteristics.





With better data the Government can understand why things are unfair such as the disability employment gap.



We need all Government departments to take part in this work.

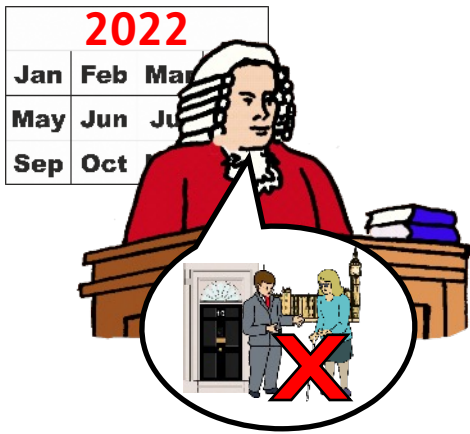
Women and Equalities Committee recommendation about the status of the Strategy



The National Disability Strategy was held up in 2022. This delay frustrated disabled people and their organisations.

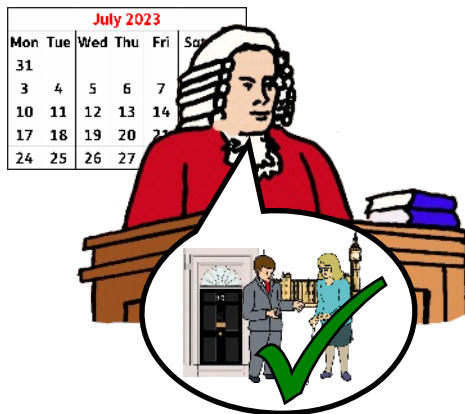


The Committee thinks the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work should have checked the actions that were in progress to give updates to disabled people's organisations and other relevant stakeholders.



Our reply

The National Disability Strategy was held up in 2022 when the High Court said the Government did not consult disabled people properly.



In July 2023, the Court of Appeal overturned the High Court decision and said the Strategy and the UK Disability Survey were lawful.



During the break for an appeal, some work continued but the Government paused 14 policies.



The pause made it hard for the Government to keep a check on the Strategy's actions which were still in progress.

Women and Equalities Committee recommendation about updating Parliament



The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work should immediately tell Parliament and disability stakeholders the exact timescales for delivering all remaining actions in the National Disability Strategy.

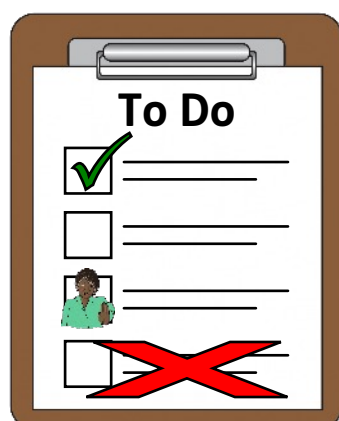
Our reply

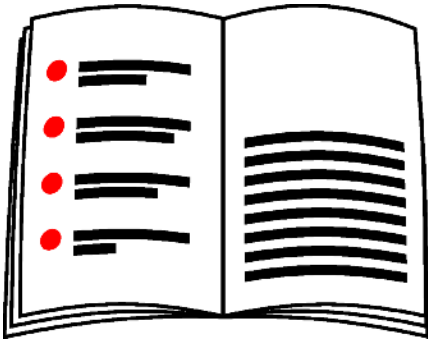
September 2023						
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27				



The person who was the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work gave a full update to Parliament on 18 September 2023. They said:

- how the Government would move forward on the 14 commitments that were paused
- 47 actions had been completed, 54 actions were in progress, 1 was paused and 2 were no longer being taken forward.

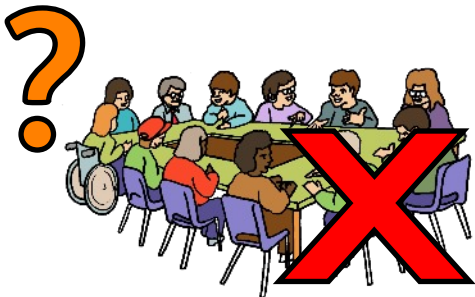




The Government will publish more updates with our report on progress made on the new Disability Action Plan.

Women and Equalities Committee recommendation about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The committee made 3 recommendations:



a) The Government should give its reasons for not meeting with the UN in August 2023.



b) The Government should say why it has not yet properly looked at the UN Committee's 2016 recommendations. The committee wants to know the steps the Government is taking to do that work and when those recommendations will be met.

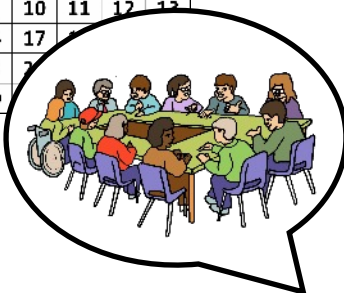


- c) The Government should explain what it is doing to make sure all its departments understand and follow the principles of the UNCRPD when they are making their policies.

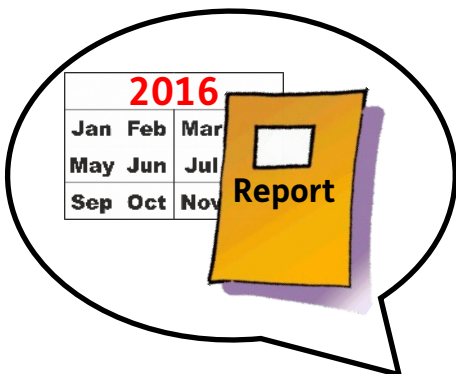
Our reply

- a) Reasons for not meeting with the UN in August 2023.

August 2023						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities invited the UK Government to a public session on 28 August 2023.



They wanted to talk about the UK Government's follow-up reports to an inquiry in 2016.



The Government did not have enough time to get ready for the meeting because of other pressures.

March 2024						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



So, we agreed with the UN Committee that we would meet in March 2024 to tell them about our progress.



b) Steps we are taking to follow the UN Committee's 2016 recommendations.

We believe in the UNCRPD and in improving the lives of disabled people.



To handle the barriers faced by disabled people, we have already invested in:

- employment support initiatives



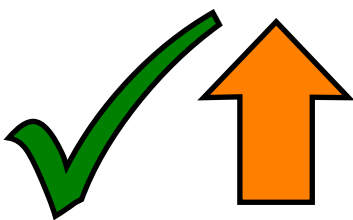
- health and disability benefits system and social care support



- improving the accessibility of homes



- transport.



We know that more needs to be done.

2024			
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec



The new Disability Action Plan sets out the immediate action the Government will take in 2024 to improve disabled people's lives. This is the start for longer term change set out in the National Disability Strategy.



We have put our reports about the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' 2016 inquiry on GOV.UK with accessible versions.



- The reports show our commitment across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to supporting disabled people.



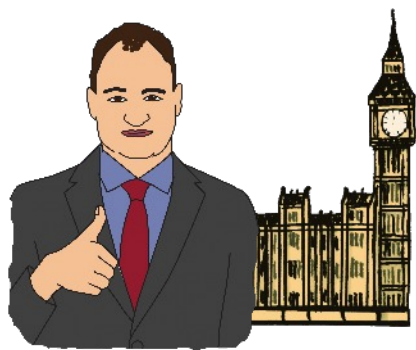
- This will happen through laws, policies and programmes that tackle the barriers faced by disabled people to enable their full participation and inclusion in society.

- c) All departments understand and follow the principles of the UNCRPD when they are making their policies.



The Disability Action Plan says the Disability Unit will work with departments to help them understand the UNCRPD. This is also covered in the National Disability Strategy.

Conclusion



The Government thanks the Committee for its recommendations.



We believe the National Disability Strategy and the Disability Action Plan show how the Government is bringing departments together to improve disabled people's lives now and long-term.



We will continue to listen to and work with disabled people so they have meaningful input into Government policy development and services.

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