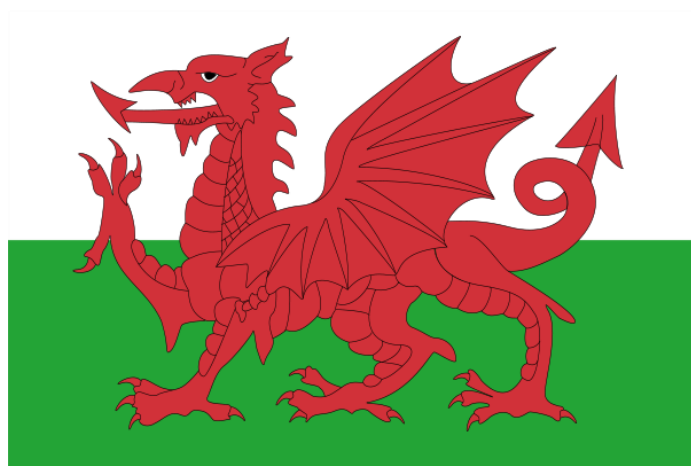


Life in Wales

The experiences of People First Members

Since the vaccination roll out



**By Sophie Hinksman, Lynne
Evans, Michelle Williams and
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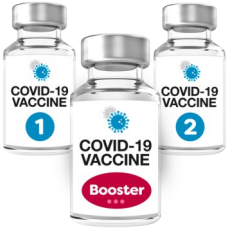


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Introduction



This report is about our members experiences of life in Wales.



It is based on members experiences since the **vaccination roll out**.



Until the 27th November when the new **Omicron variant** was first reported.



The information in this document comes from the members of People First across Wales.

It talks about the main things that affect their lives.

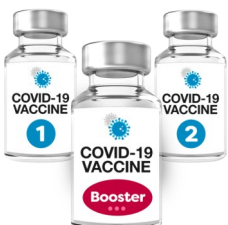


This report follows on from our:

- Red
- Amber
- Winter reports



These were produced in 2020 and 2021.



Before the **vaccination roll out**.



This report will explain the impact on the lives of the members.



Since restrictions were reduced.

It has been produced by:

- Sophie Hinksman
- Lynne Evans
- Michelle Williams
- Joe Powell



They all represent All Wales People First on the **Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group**.

LDMAG

This report will be given to members of the **Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group**.



The information was taken from survey's of self-advocacy groups in Wales.

22

Across the 22 counties.

Impact on Life



There have been positives and negatives on members' lives since the restrictions were reduced.



For some members things are better.

They have been able to return back to work.



Or voluntary positions.

Most members do not have paid work.



For most members things are worse.

Most people feel anxious and afraid.

1 year

Some members have not been outside for over a year.



Because many members live with support they have had more restrictions than the general public.



Those who live independently have had more freedom.



Social workers have been lacking in some regions.
More people have been able to use Zoom and other **digital platforms**.



This has increased their **digital literacy**.
It has meant their voice has carried further.



For other members things have *not changed*.

Many people have not been able to use **digital platforms**.



This has meant they have lost their voice.

It has restricted their communication.



And made them less confident about socialising outside.



It has had a negative affect on their mental health.

Some people are more anxious.

And depressed.



Some people have been suicidal.

Many have been less visible in society.



As restrictions have affected them worse than most other groups.



A few members have felt more included in society.

This is because some communities have come together during the pandemic.



In order to check that everyone is ok.

Accessible Information



One of the biggest challenges throughout the pandemic has been a lack of **accessible information**.



This has made it difficult for people to understand what has been going on.



And this has made people more anxious.

As well as meaning they have been less informed than their **peers**.



When Easy Read has been produced it has often

been produced after full versions have been published.



Any information members have had, has often been provided by their local PF group or:



All Wales People First.

Annual Health Checks



Members have had different experiences of **Annual Health Checks**.



Some members have had their **Annual Health Checks**.



Some have had **Annual Health checks** but not as often as they should.



Many members have not.

Some groups lost members who lived on their own.



They were not connected digitally.

They were not able to get their health checks.



Access to GP's were difficult for the general public.

For many with learning disabilities it was impossible.



Many people without carers did not receive any **Annual Health checks.**



Unless a carer was with them.



Some members already dependent on **psychological support** were not offered continued support for their mental health.



Day Centres/ Activities

Since the start of the pandemic some members have had their day activities reopened.



In other parts of Wales some members have activities.



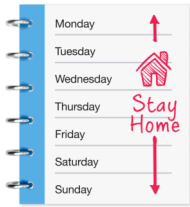
Many do not.

Those who do have some activities.



Are delivered by skeleton staff.

Some members are offered a few hours/ days to do



activities.

Many are not.



When activities have taken place they have often been the things their services can offer.



Not what they want to do.



Some have had to find other placements within their own communities.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

1 year

Some members have not been out and about in a year.



Others have been meeting friends.



Some groups have not heard about any difficulties with mental health from their members.

But they have not had contact with all members.



Most groups report **mental health difficulties** being at an all time high.



This is because they are anxious about the pandemic.



They are worried about meeting people face to face.



They are tired of having to meet on **digital platforms**.



Those able to return back to some normality are seeing their mental health slowly improve.

As they rebuild their confidence and skills.



Members already suffering from mental health problems are struggling even more.

Their anxiety is increasing.



And they are losing confidence and communication skills.

Care Service/ Supported Living



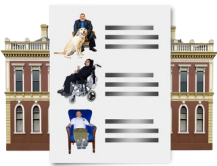
Members living in supported living or care centres have had changes to their services.



This has meant lower levels of support.



Having to stick to strict Welsh Government guidelines (not many people in a room).



Some people have been told not to look for daytime opportunities until they receive an offer from their local council.



Some groups say that members who had good support before the pandemic continue to have good support.



Those who didn't have good support before the pandemic continue to not have good support.



In some areas day centres closed.



In some cases the re-opening of day centres is either still in review or:



They are doing work on the buildings.

Public Transport



Many members are using **public transport** on a daily basis.



Some region of Wales has been affected negatively by **public transport** strikes.

Areas such as North and Mid Wales have been hit hard.

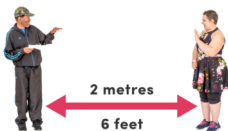


The transport was not adequate before the Covid Pandemic but now it is even worse.

There are a lack of drivers for the trains.



And a lack of carriages too.



This has meant packed carriages during times when people were supposed to be **socially distancing**.



And no rules being upheld around the use of masks.



Some members are too scared to use **public transport** at the moment.

Covid Passports



Many members did not know what **Covid passports** were.



How to get them.



And the consequences how having one .

Such as a lack of freedom.



Some people have support from their local groups to get a passport.

BIG words

The online passport application system is not accessible to our members unless they have staff support.



This is because:



Many don't have the IT skills to understand how to do it.



Many aren't able to understand the instructions on the website.



Many don't have a scanner or know how to use one.



This means they can't send a copy of their:

- Passport
- Driving Licence



Some of our members don't hold their own passport.



And many can't drive.



Some members have been able to get a Covid passport by calling the helpline.

And explaining their situation.



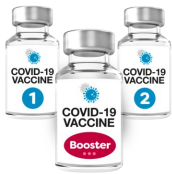
For some this has been really easy.

For others it has not.



It depends on where you live.

Conclusions



Overall people with learning disabilities have been negatively impacted on since the **vaccination roll out**.



It is very important that we close the long standing gaps that have excluded people with learning disabilities.



If this doesn't happen we won't meet the aspirations of:

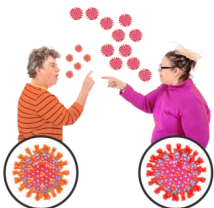


The **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and

The **Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014**.



Closing these gaps are not just important because of fairness.



They are essential because in times of crisis people with learning disabilities are affected worse than most other people.



This is not just **discrimination** it could also:



- Puts people with learning disabilities in danger.



- Stop them accessing their local communities.
- Make them isolated and lonely.



- Decrease their wellbeing.



We need to learn the lessons from the **Covid Impact Study**.



The research into the impact of the **Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014**.



And we need to make the successor to the **Improving Lives programme work**.



Welsh Government and local authorities need to work together to make sure that **Welsh legislation** is implemented properly.



That there are clearer rules.

This is important if we are to make things work.



And work equally in each part of Wales.

Glossary



Accessible Information

This is information you can understand. Such as Easy Read.



Annual Health Checks

These are health checks that should happen every year. They are there to make sure people with Learning Disabilities get the right health support.



Covid Passports

This proves that you have had your Covid jabs. You need this to be allowed to get into crowded places.



Covid Impact Study

This is a study looking into how Covid has affected the lives of people with learning disabilities.



Digital Literacy

This is about how well you can find information on the internet.



Digital Platforms

This is the gadgets you use to go online. Such as a computer, ipad, iphone etc.



Discrimination

This is unfair treatment. Especially against people with a disability, different race or because of their gender (man or a woman).

Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group



This is a group that advises the Deputy Minister of Social Services, Julie Morgan about what is happening for people with learning disabilities in Wales.



Mental Health Difficulties

This is anything that is about how you feel, such as anxiety or depression,



Omicron Variant

A new type of Covid. It comes from South Africa.



Peers

This is someone who is equal to you. So someone of the same age for instance.



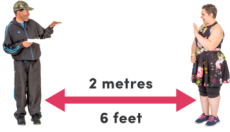
Psychological Support

This is the professional support to help with mental health. Such as a counsellor or a psychologist.



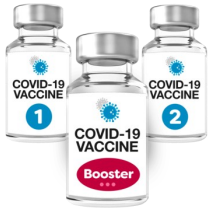
Public Transport

This is transport that is provided in your local area. Such as buses or trains.



Socially Distancing

This is the distance you have to stay from someone to stop the spread of Covid.



Vaccination Roll Out

This is when everyone in Wales was given their Covid vaccinations.



Welsh Legislation

This is the law made by the Welsh Government.

Produced by



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