

From Barely Surviving to Truly Thriving



Disabled People's Manifesto 2026-2031

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Natasha Hirst.



Introduction

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From Barely Surviving to Truly Thriving: Disabled People's Manifesto. 2026-2031

Disability Wales is the national body for Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in Wales. Our mission is to build a more **inclusive Wales** by representing their collective voice and collaborating across all sectors of society.

This manifesto has been developed in collaboration with our member DPOs, our internal policy working group and individual disabled people whose lived experiences and leadership are central to shaping its vision and priorities.

Guided by the principle **"Nothing About Us Without Us"** we are committed to ensuring that disabled people and their organisations are at the heart of decision-making in Wales.

Over the past year, we've connected with over **250 disabled people** across Wales to help shape this manifesto. Their voices have come through surveys, consultation research and focus groups covering key issues like human rights, social care, housing, employment, welfare and benefits.

To build on this, we held **three focus groups** with our policy working group, made up of staff and directors to ensure the manifesto reflects both the lived experiences of disabled people across Wales and the leadership and expertise of disabled people within our organisation.

Disability Wales's membership comprises **19 full voting DPO members**, other disability groups and **600 individual members**, representing a diverse and intersectional disabled community. Informed by our membership, this manifesto will reflect the real priorities of disabled people in Wales.

“Together, we champion the **Social Model of Disability** and campaign for a Wales where disabled people are not just barely surviving but truly thriving”.

Disability Wales

At a Glance

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**From Barely Surviving to Truly Thriving: Disabled People's Manifesto.
2026-2031**

AT A GLANCE

1

Incorporate the UNCRDP into Welsh Law. Make disabled people's rights legally enforceable by embedding the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People into Welsh legislation.

2

Deliver a Robust Disabled People's Rights Plan. Commit to a long-term, cross-party strategy co-produced with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), backed by funding and enshrining accountability for delivery, including a Minister for Disabled People.

3

Champion the Leadership of Disabled People. Support disabled leaders in public life, including representation in decision-making, policy development and resourcing the work of Disabled People's Organisations.

4

Guarantee the Right to Independent Living. Reform care, housing, and health systems to prioritise dignity, choice, and accessibility, ending institutionalisation and promoting inclusion.

5

Devolve Welfare and Benefits to Wales. Create a fair, co-produced Welsh benefits system that reflects disabled people's lived experiences and supports financial security and employment.



Key 5 Calls



Call 1

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Call 1: Incorporation of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRDP)

The (**UNCRDP**) is an **international human rights treaty** that sets out the rights of disabled people and the obligations of governments to uphold those rights.

Disability Wales has long called for the incorporation of the UNCRDP into Welsh law.

The Programme for Government included a commitment to Incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People into Welsh Law.

Despite this promise, no legislative progress has been made. This failure to deliver must be acknowledged and addressed.

Disabled people continue to face **systemic barriers** in accessing their rights. Without incorporation, the UNCRDP remains a guiding framework rather than a legally enforceable standard.



“We need full incorporation of UNCRDP to ensure that our rights are upheld effectively”. 2025 Manifesto Survey Respondent



Disability Wales

What We're Calling For

1. Incorporate the UNCRDP into Welsh Law through **primary legislation**.
2. Provide training and resources to embed UNCRDP principles across government and public services.
3. Introduce a **dedicated Code of Practice** under the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act** to support delivery of the UNCRDP



Call 2

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Call 2: A Robust Disabled People's Rights Plan

The Disabled People's Rights Plan is a **ten-year plan** for Wales. The plan has been coproduced by the Welsh Government, DPO's and disabled people to advance the rights, inclusion, and wellbeing of disabled people. It sets out priorities and actions across government departments to tackle **disabling barriers** and promote **equality**.

Disability Wales welcomes the development of the **Draft Plan** as a positive step toward upholding the rights of disabled people into policy and practice. However, we believe the plan must be strengthened to ensure **long-term impact and accountability**. A short-term plan tied to a single Senedd term risks losing momentum and failing to deliver lasting change.

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) must be recognised as essential partners in delivering the Rights Plan. As organisations led by and for disabled people, DPOs bring lived experience, expertise and trusted relationships in our community. Without sustained investment and infrastructure, DPOs cannot fully participate in or lead the co-production of the plan. We envision a Wales where the rights of disabled people are upheld through a **long-term, cross-party government strategy** that is **co-produced** with Disabled People's Organisations (**DPOs**). To move from **barely surviving to truly thriving**, DPOs must be recognised and resourced as **essential partners** in shaping and delivering this transformation.

“The aspirations are solid but there is a significant lack of resources to support this in practice”. 2025 Disabled People's Plan Survey Respondent

Disability Wales

What We're Calling For

1. Commitment from **all political parties** to implement the Disabled People's Rights Plan **beyond the current Senedd term**.
2. Embed clear accountability mechanisms, including establishing and resourcing the **External Advisory Board**, regular progress reviews and **transparent public reporting**.
3. Prioritise DPOs in funding, commissioning, and partnership opportunities to support delivery of the plan.



Call 3

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Call 3: Championing Disabled People in Leadership and Governance

Disabled people have the right to thrive, not only in their personal lives but also in **public life**. Leadership, civic engagement, and political participation are vital areas where disabled people must be supported to have equal power and voice. This includes access to elected office, **representation in decision-making**, and **leadership** within public bodies and political parties.

Disabled people remain underrepresented in political and public life. Barriers to participation include **inaccessible systems**, lack of financial support, and exclusion from leadership pathways.

We envision a Wales where disabled people are not just consulted but leading the discussions and decision making. Where **our voices shape policy**, our experiences inform decisions, and our leadership is visible across all levels of governance. This is essential to moving from barely surviving to truly thriving.

“We don't want to just be listened to, because we've had enough of fake listening exercises where our views are recorded but have no effect. There must be some teeth, some mechanism, where what disabled people say is actually binding. And disabled people should be able to lead the consultations themselves”. 2025 Disabled People's Plan Survey Respondent

Disability Wales

What We're Calling For

1. Parties to commit to implementing **equality and inclusion guidance** and publishing reports on progress
2. Parties to **transparently** publish the percentage of disabled members they have currently and a target for improvement in the run up to the 2026 Senedd and 2027 Local Government elections
3. Commit to and Support the Calls to establish a **Minister for Disabled People in the Senedd** to lead on disabled people's rights and representation.



Call 4

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Call 4: Our Right to Independent Living

Independent living is our fundamental human right. It means having the **freedom, dignity and control** to make choices about your own life.

Yet in Wales today, too many disabled people are denied this right. Barriers remain embedded in systems that are underfunded, profit-driven, and **not designed with disabled people in mind**. These barriers strip away autonomy and keep people trapped in unsuitable housing, inflexible care arrangements and discriminatory environments.

Independent living is our human right and must be the foundation of all services and support for disabled people in Wales. Disabled people must have real voice and control over their support.

We envision a Wales where disabled people can achieve independent living, with the right support, in the right place, at the right time. A Wales where care is not commodified but rooted in dignity and choice. Where housing is accessible, health services are inclusive, and no one is forced into institutional settings. A Wales where we are free from hate, discrimination, and assumptions and where we can **truly flourish**.



“We need a better paid and support care workforce, with funding to allow us to live own independent lives. Not be limited to hours? and number of carers in place which limits human rights and treats disabled as if in prison”.
2025 Disabled People’s Plan Survey Respondent



Disability Wales



Call 4

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What We're Calling For

1. Improve the social care system by **removing profit-driven models**, improving pay and conditions for care workers, and increasing uptake of Direct Payments.
2. Ensure disabled people have the right to **independent living in their own homes**. This means investing in accessible housing, ending institutionalisation and providing the community-based support needed to live safely and freely.
3. Launch a national campaign to tackle ableism, stigma, and discrimination. This must include myth-busting, rights education, and proactive measures to **reduce hate and harmful assumptions** about disabled people's lives and capabilities.





Call 5

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Call 5: Devolution of Welfare and Benefits

Welfare and benefits systems play a critical role in supporting disabled people's **independence, wellbeing and financial security**. Currently, these systems are largely controlled by the UK Government, limiting Wales' ability to design support that reflects the lived realities of disabled people.

To truly thrive, disabled people need both a co-produced benefits system and access to suitably paid, inclusive, remote and flexible employment opportunities. Employers must understand and uphold disabled people's rights in the workplace, and there must be consequences when those rights are breached. Reform is needed to improve schemes like **Access to Work**, strengthen employment protections, and overhaul the **Disability Confident programme** to ensure it delivers real change.

Devolving welfare powers to Wales would allow for more responsive, fair, and inclusive support systems, designed in coproduction with disabled people and DPOs. We envision a Wales where welfare systems are **empowering, not disabling**. Where disabled people are supported to live independently, participate fully in society, and access the resources they need without fear or stigma.

“Without these benefits I could not get to the doctor's or hospital. Even shopping would be a problem. My Motability car is my lifeline. I could not afford a car without my **PIP**. I would not be able to have treatments to help manage my pain”. Proposed Disability Cuts Survey Respondent

Disability Wales

What We're Calling For

1. **Devolve** welfare and benefits powers to the Welsh Government.
2. Design a **Welsh benefits system** in co-production with DPOs and disabled people.
3. Ensure the system reflects the **Social Model of Disability** and **prioritises dignity, choice and inclusion**.



Conclusion

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“Disabled people in Wales deserve more than mere survival. We deserve the right to truly flourish and thrive”.

“This manifesto sets out a bold and achievable vision for a Wales where disabled people are empowered to live full, meaningful lives. From legal incorporation of the UNCRDP and a long-term Rights Plan, to inclusive leadership, independent living, and a fair and empowering welfare and employment system, each call reflects the lived realities and aspirations of our community”.

“We know that change is possible, but it requires commitment, collaboration and courage. We call on all political parties to adopt these five calls and work with us to build a Wales where disabled people are not just supported but celebrated. A Wales where rights are upheld, voices are heard, and thriving is the standard, not the exception”.

“Together, we can move from surviving to thriving”.



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