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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development
and the twenty-fourth special session of the General
Assembly: Priority Theme: Creating full and productive
employment and decent work for all as a way of
overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from
the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Statement submitted by the Asian People's Disability Alliance (APDA), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

We at APDA and with help from our fellow disability activist peers, and organisations that we work with in the UK, would like to address the council to consider the following matter that are affecting Disabled people in the UK.

We have been put into a worse state with regards any ability to gain employment after Covid-19 pandemic and now the Crisis of living and fuel poverty hitting hard on its heels.

We cannot even afford to go to work at times with the crippling costs of living, heating, and food, travel etc.

These are the key points that we feel needs to be highlighted to the Development Forum.

Our community is facing incredible financial burdens

- More than half of people who use food banks are Disabled people.¹
- Social care charging means Disabled people often must give up their modest income to pay for essential care.²
- Half of all people living in poverty are either Disabled people themselves or have a Disabled person in their household.³
- 21% of children in families with at least one Disabled family member live in poverty.⁴

The Cornwall Disability Alliance of 110 disability organisations have informed us that after listening to their stakeholders and responding to need, pooling resource and assets, and bringing assistance where it's needed most.

Data from the 2011 census showed a higher than national average proportion of disabled people in Cornwall. The national average is about one in seven, while here it's about one in five. This figure will be higher now, and future modelling shows that, due to Covid-19, there will be up to 1.9mn more disabled people of working age, or younger, in the UK, by 2025. This is in addition to our aging population. Over the last year we have already seen a 30% increase in demand for services.

The pandemic meant they faced immediate and multiple inequalities that could never have imagined. This pandemic arrived after 10 years of Austerity, and now a range of issues combines to make our present situation incredibly threatening for our core audiences. These issues include:

- Disability related expenditure, costing between £600 and £1000 per month, plunging our stakeholders into **poverty**;
- Years welfare reforms and increased conditionality for state support;
- Having to pay a greater personal contribution towards social care costs;

¹ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2021/06/28/the-state-of-hunger-its-not-right-that-disabled-people-are-being-forced-to-turn-to-food-banks/>.

² <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/04/13/social-care-cuts-increased-charges-causing-huge-distress-disabled-people/>.

³ <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Measuring-Poverty-2020-Web.pdf>.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/disability-facts-and-figures/disability-facts-and-figures#:~:text=21%25%20of%20children%20in%20families,families%20with%20no%20disabled%20member.>

- Inequalities faced throughout the pandemic, which left us without necessary protections, support or therapies;
- The lack of community care; and
- The inaccessibility of the built environment, despite nearly 30 years of anti-discrimination legislation;

This combines to trap disabled people in a vicious cycle that pushes them deeper into isolation and poverty.

The Trussell Trust estimates that more than half of food bank users are disabled people and a recent survey from Leonard Cheshire found that 600,000 disabled people had just £10 per week or less to live on.

Our stakeholders are:

Unable to reduce heating costs – this will result in pain, stiffening of joints, or because they can't regulate their own body temperature, due to a neurological condition;

Unable to use less energy – as they have to power vital equipment such as hoists, beds, breathing equipment and power chairs;

Unable to eat healthily or specialist diets prescribed by GPs, as they're too expensive.

“In truth - People are telling us they can't afford to stay home or go out, they are dying quietly and no one cares”

Another group, Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG), a countrywide coalition of major charities, organisations, and relevant groups, all working together to highlight and work towards solutions to the current cost-of-living crisis. They have provided more information that should be heard and understood to realise the dire situation that faces disabled people across the four nations of the UK.

All group findings are showing the rising costs of both energy and food are proving potentially destructive.

For example Disabled people's energy costs are often higher than those of non-disabled people because they may need to run the heating more (to cope with lower mobility or prevent severe illness due to weakened immune systems) and to charge essential medical and mobility equipment, such as oxygen machines, ceiling track hoists, through floor lifts, suction machines for tracheostomy blockages to prevent choking, and feeding pumps, not to mention multiple daily uses of washing machines and showers. This of course means the rising costs in energy hit the Disabled hardest.

Food prices affect Disabled people as many Disabled individuals have special diets and allergies. If a certain specified food has increased in price, cheaper brands are then going to be the alternative, and many are not suitable due to ingredients. Also, many autistic children will only eat certain brands of food and will not eat anything else that is provided as an alternative to it should the preferred option increase in price and become unaffordable.

Many Disabled people of course cannot currently afford either as inflation steadily climbs increasing costs. Disability related benefits increased only by 3.1% this year while inflation peaks at 9.8%. The [Work and Pensions Committee](#) and the DPCG recently asked the Government to increase benefits now, but the response was that there would be no increase until April 2023 meaning the gap between income and expenditure for Disabled people is now unattainable.

Research and statistics

Research by DPCG member [SCOPE](#) found that the average Disabled person already must spend £583 per month more than a non-disabled person to achieve the same standard of living. For one in five of us, these extra costs reach more than £1,000 a month. More than a million people in the UK have experienced life-threatening asthma attacks after cutting back on medicine, heating and food amid the soaring cost of living crisis, a survey by [Asthma and Lung](#) have found.

There have been warnings from other health charities about the [impact of the cost of living crisis](#). A recent survey by the [MS Society](#) found that one in five people with multiple sclerosis did not have enough money to start the medication of treatments they needed with a third reducing or stopping treatments or therapies, greatly putting their health at risk.

[Macmillan Cancer Support](#) found that around 2 million people with cancer are already concerned about the cost of their bills over the forthcoming year. Heating for cancer patients as well as those Disabled people who cannot regulate their own body temperature, is essential.

Research carried out by group member Leonard Cheshire in April found that

- More than 600,000 disabled people in the UK estimated to have £10 or less per week to pay for food and other costs.
- Around a quarter surveyed in 2022 had missed meals or not heated their homes.

[Citizens Advice](#) have found that when vulnerable consumers struggle with their payments, energy suppliers are required to support them. This usually takes the form of a repayment plan, agreed between the supplier and the customer. However, as financial pressures grow, many are struggling to meet their ongoing usage, let alone payments towards arrears.

This is leading to an escalation of debt collection activity, with suppliers increasingly forcing customers onto prepayment meters so that they stop building up debt and so the supplier can collect a part of the debt every time someone tops up.

This is extremely risky for Disabled customers; if a customer who is struggling to pay is put onto a prepayment meter, then they may not have enough money to top up their meter and their power will be disconnected. This is called self-disconnection.

Research by the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) in their UK poverty report in 2022 found that poverty is consistently higher for Disabled people.

A new report by the Family Found called "[The Cost of Caring](#)" that polled 4,264 families with a disabled child or seriously ill child, found that nine in 10 families are struggling, or falling behind on their regular household bills and many are forced to forego living essentials such as food, heating, basic furniture like beds, flooring, washing machines and fridges, to try to make ends meet. Over half of parents and carers (54%) report skipping or cutting the size of their meals because there wasn't enough money for food and more than one in ten (13%) say they've had to cut back on essential items for their disabled children.

We wish to end our statement by asking the forum council to urgently review the methods and policies of the UK government which are killing thousands of disabled people across the UK with no redress for their families. Right now, there appears to be no positive method or way for Disabled people to stay warm or fed and retain any dignity in their lives, let alone gain meaningful employment to break the cycle of poverty.