

## Care Homes, Covid-19 and Independent Living

### What has been happening to people in care homes, during the Covid-19 crisis?

The UK Government has been telling us every day how many people have died from Covid-19. But they only tell us how many people have died from Covid-19 in hospitals.

Lots of people have also died in care homes and other kinds of group living where disabled people stay - maybe more than in hospital.

([More than a third of care homes in England](#) had Covid-19 by 15th May 2020.

[29% of the deaths from Covid-19 in Greater Manchester](#) by that date happened in care homes.

[More than half of the deaths from Covid19 in England will have been connected to care homes by the end of June.](#))

The numbers of deaths we know about for care homes are only for older people's care homes.

We do not know how many people have died in other kinds of group homes, for example:

Assessment and Treatment Units;

Mental health hospitals,

Group homes where learning disabled and autistic people live.

(It may not have [been recorded](#), how many other disabled people have died of Covid-19.)

Learning disabled [Activists, including Simone Aspis, are taking legal action to make the Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) tell us these numbers.](#)

The government has treated disabled people in care homes as if our lives do not matter.

To make space in hospitals people were sent back to care homes when they still had Covid-19. This means staff and the people they live with have been catching Covid-19 as well.

[\(ITV News say the Government decided this on purpose and told hospitals to do it.](#)

The government also [rejected a plan](#) to lock down care homes to keep people safe.)

There have been ['Do Not Resuscitate' \(DNR\) orders being put on whole care homes](#), including where younger learning disabled people live. (This means that none of the people who live there will get some life-saving treatments).

Many group homes have no visitors allowed because of Covid-19. This means disabled people have died without their friends and family around them and checking if they are safe.

Care home staff have caught, and died from, Covid-19 at higher rates than any other job.

([Their death rate has been double that of medical staff in hospitals](#). This may be because carers have not been able to get enough face masks, gloves and aprons to protect against Covid-19.)

It may be part of the reason why [Covid-19 has hit black and other ethnic minority communities](#) hard, because a lot of black and minority ethnic people (BAME) people work in social care.

[Also](#), black and Asian care home residents have died of Covid-19 at higher rates than white ones.

## **What is being done about it?**

There have been lots of people saying care homes need to be made better, to make them safer.

Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham, wants care homes and other 'social care' services to be run by local authorities again [and made part of the NHS](#).

There have been news stories like the [Sheffield care home whose staff moved in](#) to prevent the spread of Covid-19 - showing care home staff as 'heroes'.

GMCDP agrees that group homes need more masks, gloves and aprons, more staff training and information, or equipment. But this is just a tiny part of a much bigger problem.

## **What does GMCDP think we should do?**

The Disabled People's Movement has always said we should get rid of all care homes that separate us from society.

The modern UK movement was started by [a group of disabled people trying to get out of a Leonard Cheshire care home in Hampshire](#). Their struggles led to them thinking up the idea of Independent Living - how we could **all** live as part of our communities.

Jenny Morris, a disabled academic, says the ideas behind independent living are that:

- all human life is of value;
- everyone can make choices somehow;
- we have the right to control our own lives;
- we have the right to join in with society fully.

Independent Living does not mean living by ourselves, or having no help - it means having real choices and deciding what support you get, who gives it, when and how.

The Disabled People's Movement campaigned for disabled people to get choice and control over the support we need. We asked government to give disabled people money (direct payments) so we can employ our own support workers and personal assistants (PAs).

This is one of the [Seven Needs for Independent Living](#) listed by Derbyshire CIL in the 1980s.

PAs (and support workers) are different from staff in care homes because the disabled person is their boss. We

decide how they help and what with. They are not heroes, they are doing their job.

## **Why is Independent Living better?**

The [Disability News Service](#) says that disabled people who have our own PAs may have been safer than people in care homes. Even though many couldn't get councils to send them gloves, masks and aprons.

Research [has shown](#) that our PAs enjoy their job more and find it less stressful than people who work in care homes.

Our own PAs may be at a much lower risk of catching Covid-19 (or catching any other diseases) than care home staff.

Having our own PA may not be what every disabled person wants. People with different types of impairments may need different types of support, and may need help with making their support happen.

We believe that with the right help, and enough money, all disabled people can live in their own homes in the community. We can all have choice and control over how we are helped, and enjoy the same rights and freedoms as non-disabled people.

We mean older people as well, even though they are not always thought of as "disabled people".

Disabled people's organisations should tell people in care homes that there are other ways of living with help.

The right to independent living for all disabled people is in [Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#).

Some disabled people may like to live by themselves, with help. Other people may like to live together and share staff. The difference between this and a "care home" is that people are choosing to live together and have control over their help. (Instead of being put in a care home against our wishes and managers controlling how we are helped).

### **Is it possible?**

Independent living for all disabled people is such a big change, it might seem like it can't happen.

We think it can happen, and to do it:

It would take time and money;

We need Councils and housing companies to build more accessible housing, that is cheap;

The government would need to pay for more direct payments;

Disabled peoples groups can support everyone to do it a new way. (Through local authorities or [a new national funding system](#)).

Things are changing more than they have ever done, because of Covid-19:

Some [care homes had to close because of Covid-19](#);

[directors of social services are worried about carrying on their work through private companies.](#)

However long Covid-19 lasts, the government will need to do a lot to help society and the economy recover.

So as a part of that change, they could decide that everyone has choice about:

Where they live;

Who they live with;

Staying part of their community.