



## Disability Rights UK (DRUK) – News Roundup – March 2023

We work with our members to influence national policy on independent living, benefits,

education, employment, transport, human rights and other issues – shaping policy through direct experience and expertise.

We also work with our local individual and organisation members to empower and to influence local policy and services.

To contact Disability Rights UK (DR UK) see

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/contact-us](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/contact-us)

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## **Rights On Flights Campaign**

DR UK is joining TV presenter Sophie Morgan and MP Marion Fellows to demand that the Government gives the Civil Aviation Authority more powers to fine airlines and other actors who fail in their obligations to Disabled travellers.

Whether it's assistance not being properly provided, being left alone on aircraft long after landing, or having essential mobility equipment damaged or broken, each Disabled traveller has their own story to tell.

There is still time to take action. Write to your MP and ask them to sign the letter to the Prime Minister. Over a hundred MPs have already committed to this. [Head to our rights on flights web page to take action.](#)

## **Communications Survey**

DR UK is interested in what you think of, and how you use, our communications. Do you read e-news? How often? Do you use our website? Read our emails? Use our social media channels? We want to ensure we give you the information you need, with the frequency in which you need it, in the formats and channels in which you need it. Please take a few minutes to [fill in our communications survey.](#)

## **Disability Rights Leading Light Judy Heumann Dies**

One of the founding mothers of the international disability rights movement, Judy Heumann, has died aged 75. Learn more about [Judy Heumann's life](#) on the DR UK website.

## **Radical Reform Of Benefits Assessments For Those With Mental Health Problems Essential**

Mind's latest report outlines changes the Government needs to make to the benefits assessments system and sets out the case that people with experience of the system need to be at the heart of how to improve it. Read more about [Mind's report on benefits policy](#) on our website.

## **Hancock Favours Withdrawing Funding For Learning Disability Hub**

Messages leaked by Isabel Oakeshott from the former Health Secretary Matt Hancock have revealed that he threatened not to fund a centre for people with learning disabilities to try to make a potentially rebellious MP, James Daly, the MP for Bury, fall into line over a critical vote during the pandemic. [Learn about Matt](#)

[Hancock's deals](#) on the DR UK website.

### **Government Special Educational Needs Report Is Released**

Ministers have finally published their special educational needs (SEN) report, pledging to go ahead with major countrywide reforms. [Get our view on the SEND Plan](#) on our website.

### **Calls For Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) To Introduce Rigorous Guidance For Writing About Disability**

DR UK is backing a campaign to ensure that there is proper, rigorous guidance for how the media talks about Disabled people and chronic health conditions. Read more about [the campaign to change IPSO guidelines on disability](#) on the DR UK website.

### **The Sun Calls Sophie Morgan A 'Wheelchair'**

The Sun has run a full front page splash headline story calling TV presenter Sophie Morgan a wheelchair.

Attempting to announce that the Loose Women presenter and driving force behind the Rights on Flights campaign had been announced as a contestant on Strictly Come Dancing, The Sun opted for the headline: 'Cha Cha Chair' with the subheadline 'First wheelchair contestant'.

Responding on Twitter to the headline, Sophie said: "CHA, CHA, CHAIR....' is this actually for real? @TheSun we need to have a word. I am NOT a wheelchair. I am a PERSON who uses a wheelchair."

DR UK's Media and Communications Manager Anna Morell said: "The language we use about Disabled people and disability matters. When national news outlets get this wrong, it perpetuates the bad standards which are embedded within the language society at large uses about disability.

"People don't think twice about conflating people with their mobility aids. Such language literally turns a person into an object. It would be the equivalent of a Strictly headline about Jeremy Clarkson saying 'Clar Clar Car – first car contestant'. It simply wouldn't happen. We've still got a way to go to make people understand the difference."

DR UK is encouraging people to complain to IPSO about the language used about Sophie.

There is a basic guide to language to use about disability on the gov.uk website. You can learn more about [Sophie Morgan's](#)

[depiction on the Sun's front page](#) on our website.

### **Twitter Row Between Musk And Employee Over Disabilities**

The CEO of Twitter, Elon Musk, has apologised to a Twitter employee with muscular dystrophy after a flurry of disparaging tweets. Read more about [Elon Musk's disablist Twitter row](#) on our website.

### **Dis Life In The Daily Mirror**

DR UK's Media and Communications Manager Anna Morell writes a weekly disability column in the Mirror called Dis Life. [Read Anna's columns](#) on pre-payment meters, foodbanks and the Essentials Guarantee to ensure people have enough money to live on, the Covid Inquiry, Matt Hancock's whatsapps

### **Inadequate Social Security Level Main Driver Of Food Bank Use**

New research by the Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation finds that inadequate social security levels is the main driver of food bank need, with almost 1.3 million parcels given out from Trussell Trust food banks between April and September 2022. [Read more about the Essentials Guarantee policy ideas](#) on our website.

### **Ofgem Announces New Price Cap For Energy**

[The energy price cap](#) is a set maximum price that energy suppliers can charge consumers for each kilowatt hour of energy they use. How much you pay depends on how much energy is used. Read more about [changes to the energy price cap](#) on the DR UK website.

### **COVID Had An Outsized Impact On Disabled People Of Colour**

Initial findings from the [National Commission on COVID-19, Disablism, and Systemic Racism](#), reported by Saba Salman at the Byline Times, reveal new evidence of the pandemic's extreme impact on Disabled people from black and ethnic minority communities. Read more about [Covid's impact on Disabled People of Colour](#) on our website.

### **Thousands Of Disabled People Unfairly Chased For Social Care Debt**

[New reporting by the BBC](#) has shown that more than 60,000 Disabled adults and those with long-term illnesses in England were chased for debt by councils last year after failing to pay charges for their social care support at home. Read more about [social care](#)

[debt chasing](#) on our website.

### **DR UK Attends Launch Of Accessible Voting Campaign**

“My vote, My Voice” is a campaign designed to encourage people with learning disabilities and autistic people to vote in the 2024 General Election and onwards, noting that everyone with a learning disability or autism should be aware of their right to vote and have all the necessary information about how to vote.

### **Minister Suggests Cutting Child Benefits If Children Miss School**

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove delivered a speech at a think tank where he suggested that parents should face child benefit cuts if they fail to ensure their children turn up at school. You can read [our view on tackling truancy through benefits sanctions](#) on the DR UK website.

### **Council Urged Bring Forward Decision To End Social Care Charging**

The East London Council of Tower Hamlets has been urged to move forward with its "bold" decision to become just the second council in England to abolish all charges for care and support for Disabled people in their own homes. The council says it will scrap all charges for community-based care and support services from April 2024. Read more about the [ending of social care charging](#) on our website.

### **Government Criticised For Huge Active Travel Budget Cuts**

The government has been heavily criticised for a recent announcement that it intends to cut capital investment in walking and cycling by two-thirds. More information about the [proposed active travel cuts](#) is available on the DR UK website.

### **Prepayment Meter Ban Extended By Ofgem**

A ban on the forced installation of prepayment meters by energy companies has been extended beyond the end of March, Ofgem has announced, with the ban being in place “indefinitely”. Learn more about [the meter installation ban](#) on the DR UK website.

### **Health And Disability White Paper: Support Not Sanctions**

The Government has published its Health and Disability White Paper - “Transforming Future Support”- that it says “sets out our ambitious reforms to help more disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work and have a better experience of the benefits system”. Read [DR UK’s view on](#)

[the Health and Disability White Paper](#) and [more on the White Paper](#) on our website.

### **An Irish Goodbye Wins Best Short Film At Oscars**

The Northern Irish film, An Irish Goodbye starring James Martin who has Down's Syndrome, has won best live-action short film at the Oscars. Learn more about [the Oscar winning film](#).

### **Radical Reform Of Benefits Assessments For Those With Mental Health Problems Essential, Says Mind**

Getting the right benefits can help those of us with a mental health problem to live with independence and dignity. In a new research report, Mind outlines what changes the Government needs to make to the benefits assessments system. Learn more about [the Mind report](#) on our website.

### **Disability Campaigner Baroness Masham Dies**

Baroness Masham, who set up the Spinal Injuries Association, has died aged 87. A lifelong disability campaigner, Baroness Masham was a Paralympian swimming and table tennis medallist throughout the 1960s, and became a life peer in the House of Lords in 1970. She was the longest serving female member of the House of Lords ever. Read more [about Baroness Masham](#) on the DR UK website

### **Report Calls For Safe And Accessible Streets**

The charity Sustrans and the Disabled-led group Transport for All have worked together to explore access and barriers to local streets and make recommendations for change. Learn more about the [Disabled Citizens Inquiry](#) on our website.

### **New Emergency Alerts Service Goes Live**

This new service will enable people to be contacted via their mobile phone if their lives are at risk in an emergency. The service will be sending out a welcome message on Sunday 23 April. The welcome message will be sent to all compatible phones in the UK. It will clearly indicate that no action is required and that this is a test of the system. Get more information on the [mobile emergency alerts](#) on our website.

### **DR UK Demands Government Make New Residential Buildings Safer**

As part of a coalition of organisations, built environment bodies, fire safety organisations and DPOs, DR UK has signed a joint letter on building safety to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP. Learn more

about our [building safety open letter](#) on the DR UK website.

## **Get Involved**

### **DR UK higher education guide updated**

Into Higher Education is a guide for anyone with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability thinking about studying in higher education starting September 2023. Read more about the [DR UK Into Higher Education guide](#) on our website.

### **DR UK impairment disclosure survey**

[Disability Rights UK is conducting a survey](#) to explore the reasons for Disabled people deciding to share or not to share information about their impairment or health condition, with education providers, training providers and employers.

### **Face Equality International petition**

People with facial differences are largely missing from our media. You can sign the pledge and petition and read more about the [Face Equality International campaign](#) on their website.

### **Get Yourself Active – why we love wild swimming**

DR UK's Anna Morell wears a different hat sometimes – a swimming hat for the Outdoor Swimming Society. You can [watch a film](#) she featured in on a recent Alan Titchmarsh Love Your Weekend TV show episode about how swimming in cold seawater helps her manage her disabilities on the [Get Yourself Active website](#).

### **Every Body Moves initiative launches**

ParalympicsGB and Toyota have today announced the launch of the groundbreaking Every Body Moves initiative to empower disabled people to become active in a way that is right for them. Learn more about the [Every Body Moves initiative](#) on the Paralympics GB website.

### **See Around Britain and Europe**

See Around Britain and See Around Europe form a huge photo index of the UK and Ireland and mainland Europe, designed for everybody, including Disabled people, to help decide if a venue will be suitable for visits. Disabled people can look at photographs and read written information about access features online. Learn about [See Around's photo index](#) on their website.

### **York Access Hub**

[The City of York now has an access hub](#) with information about the city's accessibility.

## **Enable magazine**

The new edition of [Enable magazine](#) catches up with broadcaster Nicky Campbell and his daughter Kirsty to discuss them both having an ADHD diagnosis but with differing experiences. Plus news on World Down Syndrome Day; new demands for global action on care; National Carers Week and the Rights on Flights campaign.

## **What books would you read?**

JKP, the publishing house, wants to hear from you about what kinds of books you want to read, especially if you have lived experience of physical disabilities. [Contact JKP publishers](#) via their website.

## **Elevate accessible arts conference**

The University of Kent is hosting a three week slow conference, Elevate, on accessibility and the arts at its Canterbury campus. [Events for the Elevate conference](#) are listed on their website.

## **Disability Cornwall Podcast**

Disability Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has started a podcast channel with Dr Theo Blackmore, their researcher, leading conversations with a range of Disabled people who are active in Disabled Peoples' Organizations around the country. The subjects covered include Disabled mothers and the issues they face trying to keep their babies; intersectionality; and conversations with CEOs in various DPOs about the issues they are facing. [Access the podcast on YouTube](#) or via [podcast channels](#).

## **CRIPtic workshops**

CRIPtic Arts is launching free weekly online creative workshops for Disabled people on writing, confidence building, networking and sharing new work. [Sign up for CRIPtic workshops](#) on their website.