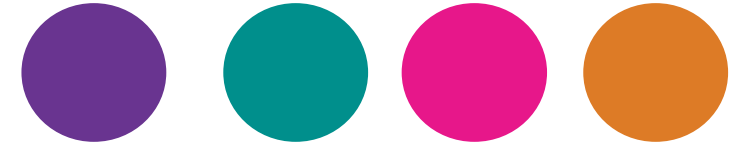




Glasgow Disability Alliance
Promoting Equality, Rights and Social Justice



Scottish Forum on Social Isolation & Loneliness

Wednesday 28th Feb 2026

Tressa Burke, CEO, GDA

Introductions and Aim of the session

- To tell you a bit about GDA .
- To share learning from our members about reality of their lives including social isolation and loneliness and impact
- To share how SIAL interacts with other inequalities to create and exponentially increase health inequalities and poorer life outcomes
- To talk briefly about what works!



GDA: in a nutshell!



Run by disabled people, for disabled people, with 6000 disabled members aged 11-100+ , GDA is the largest groundswell of disabled members in Europe; a leading and celebrated example of a grassroots community of identity. We are a pan-impairment organisation.

Built on foundations of **individual and collective community empowerment and human rights, GDA :**

- 1. Builds individual capacity for disabled people to take a leading role in their own life, their families, and their communities.**
- 2. Amplifies marginalised voices of disabled people as a diverse community, contributing lived experience and participating in dialogue, deliberation and collective advocacy to challenge inequality and exclusion.**
- 3. Collaborates for change with local and national government, communities and third sector, sharing insights and evidence to shape policy and co-design services and solutions to poverty, inequality & exclusion. Our work to strengthen and deepen deliberative democracy, supports better decision-making about public funds and contributes to a rebalancing of power in Glasgow and Scotland.**

Disabled People & Social Isolation and Loneliness in Scotland



Disabled people are disproportionately affected by social isolation and loneliness in Scotland:

- Disabled people twice as likely to report SIAL as non disabled people
- “Recovering our Connections 2023–2026” notes that the COVID-19 pandemic had a particularly severe impact on disabled people, increasing their risk of isolation and loneliness compared with the general population.
- Various Scottish Household surveys show that SIAL is highest for disabled people compared with survey averages – 20% overall feel lonely in Scotland
- The Scottish Household Survey 2024 found that disabled people were less likely (64%) than non-disabled people (69%) to meet socially at least once per week, indicating reduced social participation.
- Disabled people are also less likely to rate their neighbourhoods positively.
- 89% of disabled people surveyed by GDA in late 2025, reported concerns around SIAL

Disabled People, Social Isolation and Loneliness in Scotland



These findings are echoed by GDA's own recent survey showing the connections and the exponential and negative interactions with other barriers disabled people face.

GDA research- chiming with Scotland and UK wide research- shows that disabled people often have smaller social networks, greater dependency on those networks, less access to services they need to support them and can face stigma such as UK Gov fuelled negativity about disability benefits and the rise of the right.

Disabled people face stigma and some people internalise societal perceptions creating further isolation and challenges to

Disabling Barriers to Independent Living

Diagram shows the interconnected barriers to participation and life opportunities that disabled people face:

- **Structural and institutional:** how policies and services are designed and delivered; failing disabled people and interacting to cause inequalities and injustice.
- **Physical and environmental:** e.g. housing, built environment – which are designed without disabled people in mind.

In addition, **Attitudinal Barriers** – include low expectations, stigma, discrimination, hate crime; and now potentially pressure to relieve families and loved ones of their burden via assisted dying.

Disability is caused by these barriers – not by our impairments.



Poverty and Health Inequalities

- Disabled people make up 27% of the population in Scotland (October 2024 House of Commons)
- In Glasgow 24% of the working age population are disabled people, rising to 64% in those aged over 65. Almost a third of all Glasgow residents have one or more health conditions. (GCPH)
- Scotland's Census 2022 found that the percentage of people reporting a long-term illness, disease or condition increased from 18.7% in 2011 to 24.1% in 2022.
- Numbers reporting mental health condition have doubled.
- Extra costs – the “Disability Price Tag”- Disabled households need £1,095 more a month to have the same standard of living as a non-disabled household. This extra cost is predicted to rise to £1,224 per month by the financial year 2029 to 2030. (Scope Disability Price Tag research, 2025)



Poverty and Health Inequalities

Disabled people's lives are compromised by a number of factors:

- **Poverty** 'deep' poverty is 60% higher in families where someone is disabled than those where no one is (JRF 2023)
- **More likely to die earlier** – e.g. on average, people with learning difficulties die 15 to 20 years earlier than the general population.
- **60% of all who died during Covid** were disabled people.
- **3 times the level of unmet need** in healthcare.
- **Cuts to benefits, services and now Cost of Living crisis.**



GDA Annual Survey October 2025



What are your concerns for yourself and/or other disabled people at this time?	2025
Benefits or potential benefits cuts	96%
Money	93%
Disabled people's equality and human rights	91%
Mental health / mental ill health	89%
Social isolation and loneliness	89%
Access to services	85%
Housing	75%

GDA Annual Survey October 2025



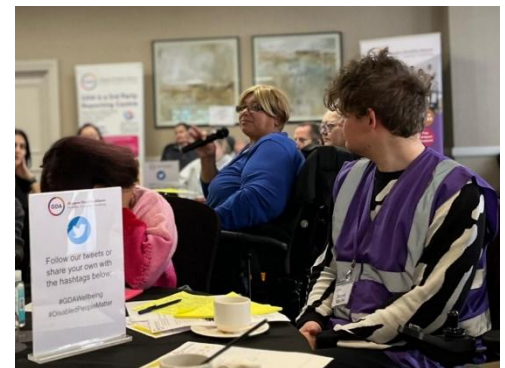
Inadequate to Meet Needs	2025	2024
Money (through benefits or work)	76%	71%
Utilities – gas and / or electricity	72%	68%
Food and essential groceries	59%	58%
Phone / internet connection	58%	57%
Continence products	48%	33%
Medication and healthcare	38%	29%
Sanitary products	27%	30%

Needs not met or unable to access	2025	2024
Mental health services	89%	89%
Health appointments and access to healthcare	89%	87%
Money advice	84%	86%
Advocacy inc. independent advocacy	81%	84%
Home energy advice	80%	78%
Information and advice	78%	81%
Personal and / or social care	75%	67%
Help from unpaid carers	74%	73%
Housing / housing support	69%	65%
Community-based services inc. peer support	65%	N/A

GDA – what we do



- **Community Development:** accessible learning, fun activities, peer support, social participation, coaching, capacity building.
- **Outreach and engagement:** finding and engaging people: online, in-person, phone, mail outs, stalls, networking.
- **Services / Supports:** Welfare Rights, Future Visions for Social Care, Wellbeing, GDA Connects (digital inclusion). EmPOWER 65+.
- **Information and Signposting:** accessible and inclusive communication, building community connections; Third Party Reporting (Hate Crime).
- **Consciousness raising:** community of identity, confidence, peer support, learning about rights; Intersectional networks (e.g. LGBTQIA+, BAME, YDP)
- **Voices:** opportunities and support to engage with power holders - Nothing About us Without Us; working in partnership; influencing, shaping policy.



GDA Member Voices



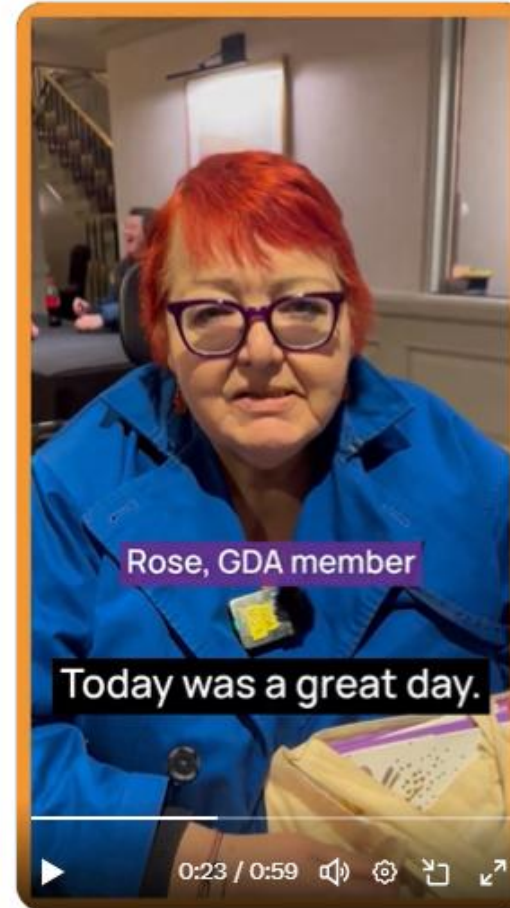
What Works:

- Sense of community and belonging
- Sense of purpose and meaning- and being valued!
- Having enough money
- Access to work & Access to support to work
- Access to Services- social care, housing, health
- community based as well as statutory
- Communication Support
- Participation, Self-Determination and making contributions
- 5 ways to wellbeing



Glasgow Disability Alliance @GDA_online · Feb 23

Catch up with GDA members chatting to Rachel about what they enjoyed the TGM and Learning Festival earlier this month. [#GDALearningFest26](#) [#GDACommunity](#) [#DPOs](#)



15 Pillars: Rights to enable Independent Living





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Thank you – please feel free to keep in touch!

info@gdaonline.co.uk

www.gda.scot

Tel: 0141 556 7103

Text: 07958 299 496

Facebook: Glasgow Disability Alliance

**contact
SCOTLAND
BSL**

X / Instagram: @GDA__online