

Policy Briefing

Coronavirus and People with Learning Disabilities in England

February 2022



The Coronavirus pandemic has been difficult for a lot of people with learning disabilities.



The Coronavirus and People with Learning Disabilities Study was a research project.

Researchers interviewed people with learning disabilities 3 times (in winter 2020/21; spring 2021 and summer 2021) about what the Coronavirus pandemic was like for them. This was Group 1.



There was also an online survey for family members or paid support workers of people who could not take part in an interview with the researchers. This was Group 2.

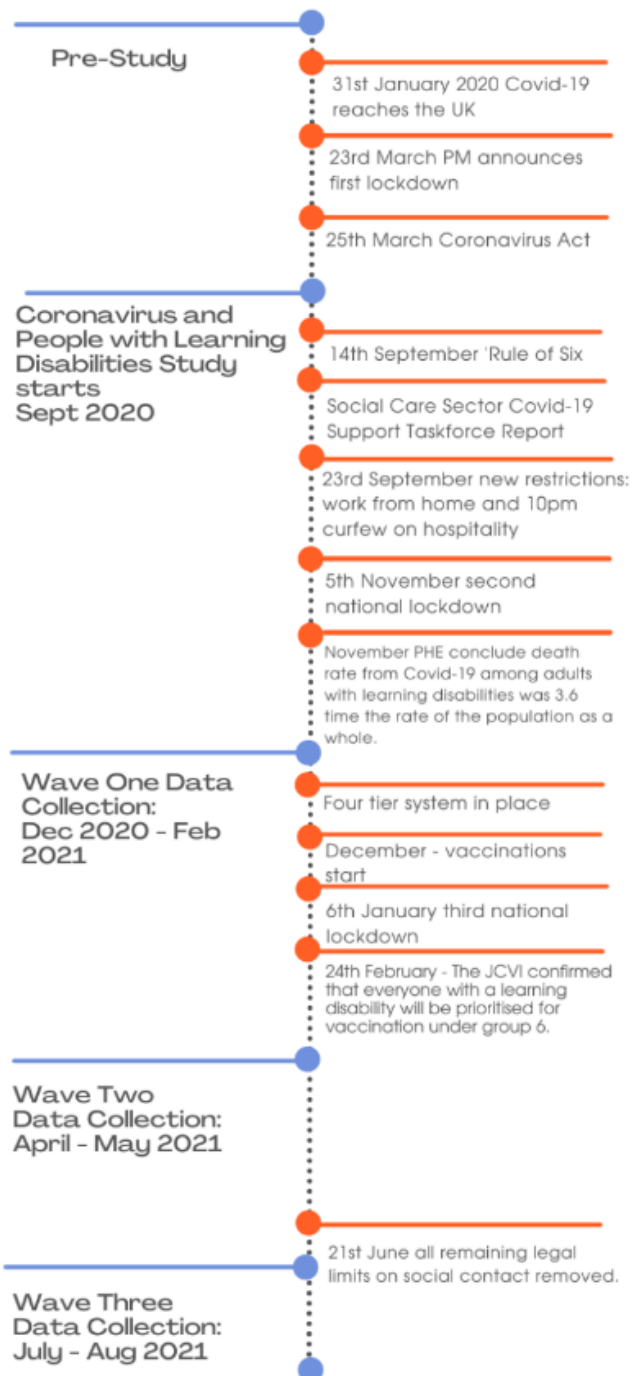


People from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland took part in the research. This report is about the most important findings from **England**.



The report is called a policy briefing. We hope it will be used by people who can make life better for people with learning disabilities.

Project and Policy Timeline

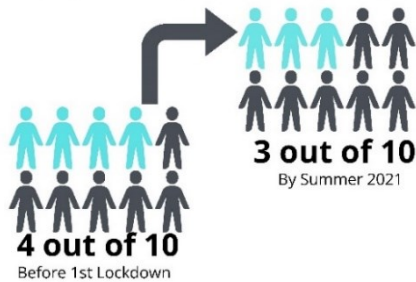


This is a timeline of when the interviews happened. It also shows when the lockdowns happened in England and when some other important things happened.



This section is about jobs and money

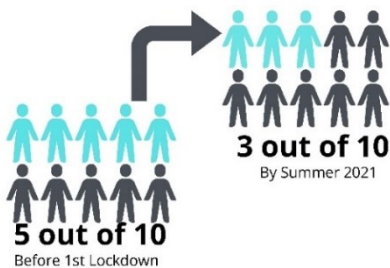
Group 1 - People with a paid job



Fewer people with learning disabilities have paid jobs now than they did before the pandemic.

Only very few family members or paid support workers said that the people they care for / support in Group 2 had a job before the pandemic, but this also went down.

Group 1 - People with a volunteer role



People in Group 1 who did volunteering jobs went down from 5 out of 10 people before the first lockdown to 3 out of 10 people in summer 2021.

Ideas for Change

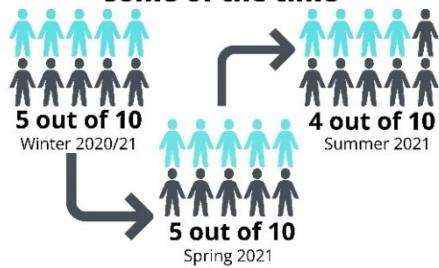


- There should be more paid jobs for people with learning disabilities.
- There should be more volunteering jobs available.
- It should be easier to work for just some of the time and not to have to worry about benefits.



This section is about mental health and wellbeing

Group 1 - People lonely at least some of the time



Around half of the people in Group 1 were lonely at least some of the time each time we did the interviews.

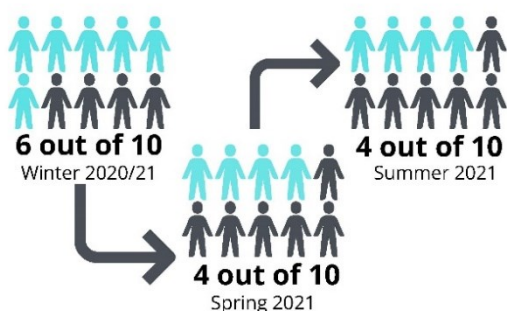


Some people with learning disabilities said that they had felt worried or anxious often or always during the pandemic.



Some people with learning disabilities in Group 1 said that they had felt sad or down often or always.

Amount of Carers feeling stressed



During the study, family members said that caring meant they felt tired and stressed.



Ideas for Change

- People with learning disabilities need more opportunities to meet other people.
- People need better advice about mental health.
- Families need more support.



This section is about services



Before the pandemic 4 out of 10 people in Group 1 went to a day service. By summer 2021, it was only 3 out of 10.

Before the pandemic, 5 out of 10 people in Group 2 went to a day service. By summer 2021, it was only 3 out of 10.



Before the pandemic, 8 out of 10 people in both groups went to community activities. By summer 2021, it was only 5 out of 10 for Group 1 and 3 out of 10 in Group 2.



The amount of people who had help from PAs or support workers went down during the pandemic.



Ideas for Change

- Not everyone was getting enough support before the pandemic. People should get more support now.
- Services should change now as people might want different things than they did before the pandemic.
- People should be asked if they want online or face to face services or both.

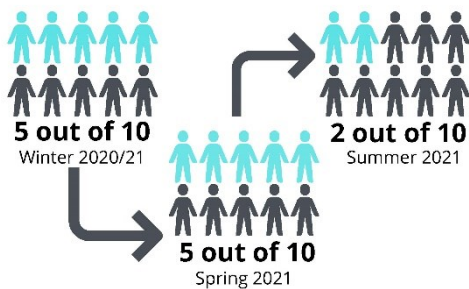


This section is about health



During the study, only just over half of people in Group 1 rated their health as good.

Group 2 - Good health rating of people they support/care for

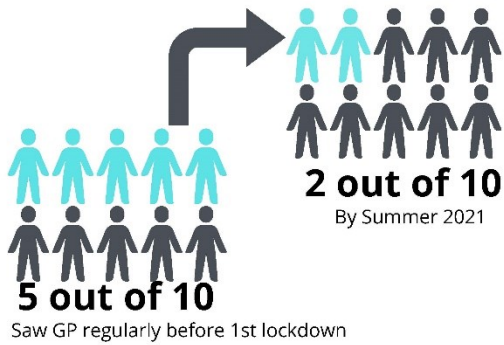


In winter 2020/21 and spring 2021, five out of ten people in Group 2 said their health was good. In summer 2021, only 2 out of 10 people said their health was good.



By summer 2021, 4 out of 10 of people with learning disabilities who said they usually had an annual health check had had one in 2021 (in person or by phone or video call).

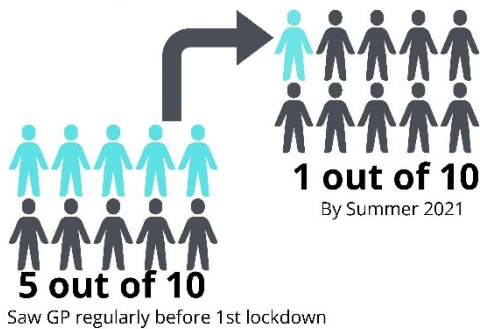
Group 1 - Contact with GP



Just over half of people in Group 1 and just under half of people in Group 2 said they used to see their GP regularly before the pandemic.

By summer 2021, less than 2 out of 10 people in Group 1 and one out of ten people in Group 2 had seen their GP in person.

Group 2 - Contact with GP



Ideas for Change

- Annual health checks should always be done and they should be done well.
- It needs to be easier to get an appointment at the doctors.
- People might not have gone to the doctor because of the pandemic so there needs to be more support now to make sure people can see who they need to see.



This section is about using the Internet



Most people with learning disabilities in Group 1 had access to the internet. Fewer people in Group 2 had access to the internet where they live and access to a device to use the internet with.



People mostly used the internet for being with friends and family online.

By summer 2021, most people in Group 1 still enjoyed taking part in online activities.



Ideas for Change

- People need more support to keep learning digital skills.
- Support staff need digital skills training so they can help people.
- Everyone needs access to digital devices.

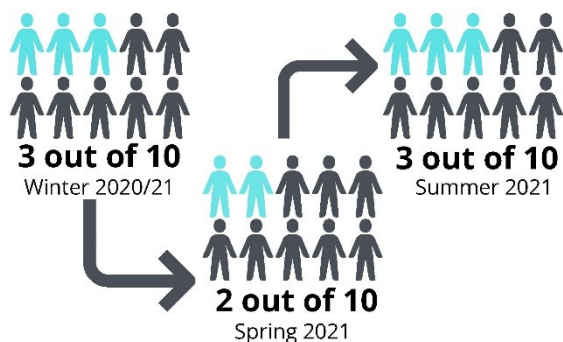


This section is about information



Most people got information about changes to Coronavirus rules from the television.

Group 1 - People who did not find it easy to find good information about coronavirus



People with learning disabilities in Group 1 did not always find it easy to find good information about Coronavirus.

Carers finding accurate information about how COVID-19 affects them



Family members and paid carers said that it was difficult to find accurate information about how Coronavirus affects them.

Ideas for Change



- Television should carry on being a good way for people to find out information about Coronavirus.
- Important Government information should always be accessible.
- Families of people with the greatest support needs must not be forgotten when important information is shared.

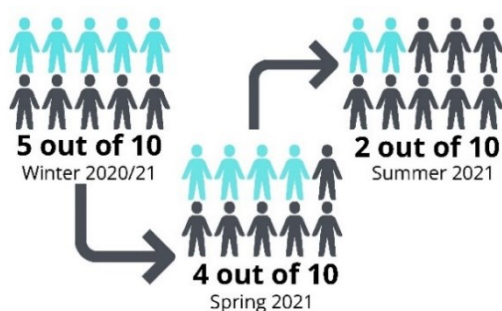


This section is about the experiences of people with greater support needs



People with profound and multiple learning disabilities were more likely than other people in Group 2 to get less support now than before the pandemic.

Group 2 - People who were shielding



Some people with learning disabilities were shielding throughout the study.

2 out of 10 people in Group 2 were still shielding in summer 2021.

Ideas for Change



- Support for families of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities should be urgently improved.
- Services need to connect with people who are shielding to find out what they need.

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