

Disability Equality Scotland (DES)

Access Panel Conference report



Easy Read



Information from Ian Buchanan, Equality and Access Manager



This year's Access Panel Conference 2024 was on 28 June:

- at Perth Concert Hall
- online on Zoom so that people could take part if they could not go to Perth



I hope this report is useful for all those who were there on the day and for the people who could not come along.



I would like to thank all the people who made the conference a success.

Your work supports us towards a future where everyone is included and can take part.

Introduction



People at the conference included:

- Access Panels
- disabled people
- **stakeholders** - people or organisations who support our work

The day included:

- presentations
- discussions
- **breakout groups** – 2 in the room and 2 online



Breakout groups are smaller group chats where everyone gets a chance to speak and listen

The theme of the conference was Looking Forward.

The conference looked at:

- people and organisations working together
- listening to what communities think about issues





- making accessibility better
- making **inclusion** better – where everyone can take part and have the same choices and chances
- working to make the quality of life better for disabled people

It gave people the chance to:



- meet other people and make connections
- share best ways of working
- build relationships that will support working together
- be part of shaping the future of DES and its work in Scotland



People thought about the DES **strategic plan** and how it fits with the work of their Access Panel.

A **strategic plan** is a document that gives details of what an organisation wants to do over a number of years.



This year's conference was led by Ian Buchanan.

His speech was about the importance of having a society that is **inclusive** and accessible for everyone.



Inclusive means:

- treating people fairly
- making sure people have the same choices and chances

and includes things like:



- policy changes
- involving the disabled community and listening to their views
- how buildings, spaces and services are designed
- disabled people being at the centre when decisions are made about them



Kaukab Stewart MSP spoke on video message about how the Scottish Government is working hard for Access Panels and disabled people.

The breakout discussion groups gave space for a deeper discussion about:



- how the strategic plan might affect Access Panels
- the **5 pillars** in the strategic plan (see pages 14 and 15)



Pillars means the main **principles** that DES stands on.

Principles are the standards for our work – what we believe in and how we want to work.



The information we got from these sessions will help us to decide what work we do in the future.

Main speech – Jane Moncrieff of Centre for Inclusive Living Perth and Kinross (CILPK)



Jane talked about:

- the history of CILPK
- CILPK being a membership organisation that represents the views of disabled people from Perth and Kinross

- the work the centre does on:



- **access audits** – checking the accessibility of a space or building

- disability awareness training for local taxi drivers



- the Keep Safe scheme that gives disabled people somewhere to go:

- if they are feeling unsafe

- where the staff have had training on how to support disabled people



The Keep Safe place is usually a shop, café, or restaurant.



Jane said:

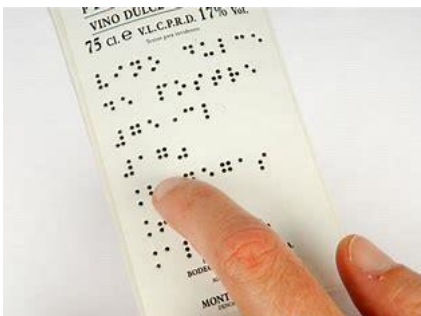
- each of us has the power to make a difference, no matter how big or small
- we should use the conference to promote the voices of disabled people

Braille Labelling Campaign Update - #JoinTheDots



These organisations gave an update on the Braille labelling campaign:

- Disability Equality Scotland
- Sight Scotland
- Oban Access Panel



The campaign wants the Scottish Government to make factories and food sellers put braille labelling on food products.

At the moment braille labelling is only put on medicines.



James Davidson, Nicoletta Primo, and Marie Harrower talked about the campaign and the importance of braille labelling.

This included a video of Marie who is blind, showing how Braille labelling:

- makes it easier for her to know what is inside food packaging
- is important for is important for people with sight loss to live a normal life



We want everyone to:

- sign the petition at: petitions.parliament.scot
- contact your local MSP and ask them to support the campaign



ScotRail – Ashley Murphy



Ashley is the Accessibility Coordinator for ScotRail.

She spoke about the work ScotRail is doing to make accessibility better at stations and on trains across Scotland.

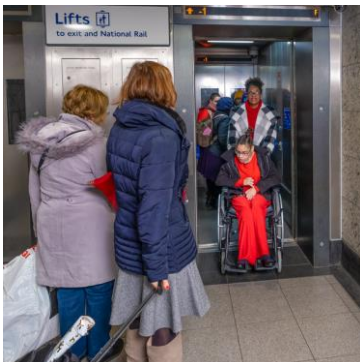


Ashley wants Access Panels and disabled people to work with Disability Equality Scotland to make accessibility and inclusion better.



Access Panels in the room wanted work on accessibility to be done more quickly especially:

- on older trains
- in places where disabled people cannot cross platforms without having to go a long way around



Ashley agreed to communicate more with Access Panels and disabled people to find out what they think and what their experiences are.



DES can support this by helping to organise meetings and groups.

Hate Crime Charter – Douglas Bryce



Douglas Bryce, Deputy CEO of DES talked about the work that has been done on the hate crime charter for public transport.



The national hate crime charter for public transport began in March 2021 after 4 years of **consultation** and **engagement** with disabled people and other vulnerable groups.



Consultation and **engagement** are ways to find out what people think and what their experiences are.



Douglas said:

- most disability hate crime (up to 97 percent) is not reported



- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service data said that in 2023 to 2024 the total number of **disability aggravated charges** went up by 22 percent to 903

This is the highest report number of charges in one year since the law started in 2010.



A **disability aggravated charge** means the criminal targeted a person because of their disability.

Adding an aggravation to the crime can sometimes change the sentence a criminal gets.



DES has:

- given 2 hate crime workshops for the Pickaquoy leisure centre in Orkney
- made a hate crime workshop for transport providers



Douglas wants people to look at the hate crime charter and tell DES what they think.

You can find out more information online at: accessibletravel.scot

Breakout sessions



Our breakout sessions:

- gave people the chance to think about and talk about the DES strategic plan and its 5 pillars
- let us ask people how the plan might affect Access Panels and Access Panel volunteers

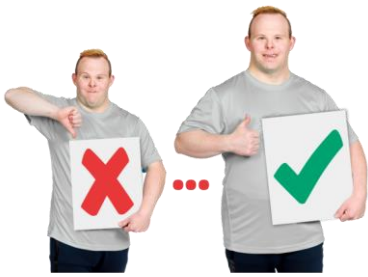


The 5 pillars are:

1. **Strengthen** - tell more people about what we do and our:

- **position** – how much people know about our organisation
- knowledge and **expertise** – things we know a lot about





- **influence** – how we can help to change things

2. **Grow** – our:

- membership and what we offer members
- engagement
- **funding** – the money that supports us to do our work



3. **Develop** – build:

- the amount of staff we have and how much work we can do
- training services
- Access Panels



4. **Value** members - to know that they are important and recognise that they do a good job.

We will always share the truth about what is happening to disabled people and how they feel.





5. **Lead** – we will lead strongly and inspire other organisations.

We will work to make change happen.

The main points of each pillar from the 4 breakout groups.

Strengthen



- DES needs to tell more people about the work it does
- shout about your successes - social media information is great but we need other ways too



- younger members are important to strengthen DES for the future



- get better at making connections with other groups



- lobby and get more involved at Parliament – be seen more

A **lobbyist** is a person or group who tries to get an MP or MSP to support a policy or campaign.

Develop



- keep giving access audit training for Access Panels

Access audits are when Access Panels members check the accessibility of a space or building.

This is important because it brings money into Access Panels.



- support Access Panels with things like funding applications
- make a database of:



- organisations to contact
- where to get funding



- have **toolkits for membership** – information on things like:
 - how to recruit new members
 - other organisations to speak to
 - advice on advertising



- invest in Access Panels

They are an important part of DES and at the moment we feel forgotten about



- there are not enough staff to support us all across Scotland – this has to change
- we cannot develop capacity if the resources are not there to support it

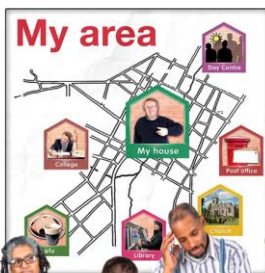
Value



- show us the benefits of being DES members
- do more work to tell more people about Access Panels across Scotland



- we do not feel valued because of:
 - cuts to funding each year
 - no capacity
 - no morale to keep going



- we want to see DES getting back to basics

DES no longer feels like a **grassroots** organisation – this means people working at a local level.

There is very little meaningful engagement with members – it all seems to be about big government organisations.

Lead



- DES must lead by listening to and working with people's **lived experience** - what people know based on the things that have happened to them

Inform people by using people's stories - especially on the Board.



- start challenging the Scottish Government more on our funding



- could we start a disability pride march?



- educate public bodies on the Equality Act 2010

- live the values of the **social model**



The **social model of disability** says that society disables people by:

- physical barriers that make spaces and buildings hard to use
- social barriers like **prejudice** – being judged in a negative way





- attitudes like people assuming that disabled people cannot do things
- not giving disabled people the same choices and chances

Themes



Common themes from each of the groups were:

- funding
- awareness raising
- how much work we can do



Access Panels and disabled people said:

- without enough money to do our work we cannot hope that things will change
- Access Panels rely on DES for things like funding and national awareness raising



If you have anything you would like to tell us about the 5 pillars please get in touch.

Thank you to everyone who gave us their views on the questions.

...and finally

The information from this conference is important when we:



- check our strategic plan
- speak to funders and the government
- promote access and inclusion
- start a longer conversation between DES and Access Panels



We thank everyone who took part and made the conference a success.

