

DISABILITY LABOUR AGM
4TH JULY 2021



Nothing about us without us

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ELECTIONS**

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

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Introduction

As the co-chair of the current Disability Labour executive, it is my pleasure to be able to report to the membership the election of the new Disability Labour executive committee. The new executive committee will assume their places after our agm on the 4th of July.

I want to remind members our constitution outlines the process we must take to fill the positions on the executive. We must advertise the opening of the process and encourage members to submit nominations. We have 15 seats. If there are 15 nominations, as has happened on this occasion. The those 15 candidates are elected unopposed.

Before announcing the new executive committee, i would like to thank those executive committee members who are not returning.

Thank you all for the time and energy you were able to give as volunteers. It hasn't been an easy term.

Now i also have the pleasure of announcing the new executive. In Alphabetical Order of Surname:

Saghir Alam	Daniel Lee Harvey
Peter Apps	John Hunt
Cheryl Barnott	Cari Jones
Kathy Bole	Nigel Long
Jan Davidson	Cath McGuinness
Kyle Eldridge	Theresa Vaughan
Jonathan Farr	Joe Watkinson
	Andrew Weston

Congratulations to everyone elected.

Kathy Bole
Co-chair

The wording for all candidate statements is exactly as submitted. No changes to the wording, punctuation, spelling or grammar has been made. Any statement exceeding 500 words has been cut at the 500 word mark. The only change made to published statements is to reproduce all statements in an identical, accessible font, Open Sans.

Saghir Alam

I have been involved with Labour Party since my school days as teenager. I have also worked towards building a fairer society for all especially people who are most excluded.

I have been Vice-Chair of Disability Labour working closely with colleagues on the Executive Committee raising disability equality issues within the Labour Party and with external organisations, also attending events particularly working on more inclusion of disabled people in parliamentary and local government process and ensuring accessible public services. Recently made contribution to Disability APPG Inquiry Access to Elected Office in the UK

I have been Chairman of Action on Disability and Development a International a Development Agency working in partnership with disabled people in Africa and Asia on Equality for Disabled People particularly on education, training and employment plus promoting rights under United Nation Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities. Worked with Department of International Development to make disability equality a key priority and established Disability Equality Framework in the Department. I was a Member the Statutory Committee of the Equality Human Rights Commission.

I have experience in the public sector leadership and governance both at local and national level. I have served three terms as a Disability Rights Commissioner. I was Lead Commissioner working with public authorities and Local Government Association to ensure inclusive public services.

I have served on Equality 2025 advising Ministers and Senior Government Officials on Public Policy. I was member of Independent

Living Scrutiny Group in Whitehall. I served as Observer Member of All Party Group and Parliamentary and Trustee Disability Rights UK. A Member of Youth Citizen Commission. I was member of Lord Chancellor's Consultative Committee. I served as Independent Governor at Westminster Foundation for Democracy appointed by Foreign Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I was elected in May 2015 and joined the Cabinet presently I am Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance. I am on the Executive Committee of SIGOMA-The Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities. I understand the challenges facing disabled people as part of central government's austerity measures at grassroot level. As Lead member of Emergency Planning since Covid 19 Pandemic I have seen first hand the challenges and disadvantage disabled people have faced due to unfair cuts to welfare benefits and public sector over last several years. I have ensured our Year Ahead Plan has commitment to Equalities and Social Justice.

I have been Patron of Include Me Too, a national organisation that works with children and families and also of Advocacy Partnership.

The above experiences will enable me to make positive contributions to the role as Executive Member and promote Disability Agenda. I hope to receive your support to continue serving on the Executive Committee.

Thank you.

Peter Apps

- Journalist, British Army reservist and Labour Party activist, paralysed from the shoulders down by a war zone car crash in 2006 at the age of 25.
- Former Fundraising Officer, Vauxhall CLP. Coordinated Labour Friends of the Forces during 2017 General Election.
- Recently released after 14 months full-time as a temporary captain in the British Army delivering analysis and other support during Covid-19 pandemic.

What I would push for if elected:

Like all disabled people, I get why the current Tory government needs to be opposed – but to do so, we need a Labour Party that works. Successive leaderships have done too little to listen to us, both on national policy and what we need within the party – access, resource, ensuring opportunity to disabled members.

I believe Disability Labour can change that, supporting the leadership to win a Labour government but also holding it and other party structures to account. Power is rarely given, only taken, and we need to be strong and smart in demanding what we really need.

I believe that means the following priorities:

Strategy and engagement: That means deciding clear, key goals – on policy wins, support for disabled members, etc – and then engaging with leadership, membership and outside world on what we want, why it matters and how we and the party should deliver it.

Access and accountability: Far too often, those with disabilities are marginalised within our movement – from meetings, campaigning and particularly National Conference. We need to engage supportively with leadership and other stakeholders, but not be shy of escalating matters and picking – and winning – key fights when we need to.

Representation and opportunity: In particular, we must ensure the party delivers on its rhetoric for improving disabled representation in politics – and delivering our own leadership training to foster a new generation of disabled voices.

Building coalitions and overcoming factionalism: That means reaching out to other groups both within the party and beyond, allowing productive and stimulating debate while avoiding falling prey to the endless factional divisions that our party suffers.

Cheryl Barrott

Thank you for considering my submission, for election, to the committee of Disability Labour.

I am a qualified Mental Health Social Worker, and was the first person to hold the post specifically for the Irish and Travelling Community, as part of the Sheffield Transcultural Team, which I helped establish and develop.

I spent most of my working life, however as a community development worker and was seconded into the Better Government for Older People (BGOP) UK Government Programme. BGOP addressed the issues relating to demographic change, through partnership working, coproduction, and full and active citizenship.

I am now retired, due to ill health, relating to my disability. I am in receipt of PIP.

In retirement, as well as facing the humiliation and degradation of the DWP its associates and procedures, I actively campaign for disability rights, through my union (Unite Community) The Coop Party, disabled peoples' organisations and the Labour Party.

I am a member of the Sheffield Labour Campaign Forum, we are piloting (for the Labour Party) supporting disabled candidates to stand for election. I stood in 2019, it was a bruising experience, which had a negative impact on my health. I hope my and other people with disabilities, experience of standing, will help Labour, locally and nationally to improve its practices in future.

I have served on the Labour Party Policy Forum, as a Health and Social Care Commissioner.

I'm currently Co-Chair of the Coop Party (dis)Ability Network and regardless of the outcome of this election, will support Disability Labour in any way I can contribute.

Given the recent impact on our community of Covid, combined with austerity measures and recent attitudes encouraged towards us, we have a lot of work to do.

Once again many thanks for your consideration.

Kathy Bole

I am seeking re-election to the executive committee of Disability Labour.

Who am I?:

1. a passionate disability activist
2. a longtime trade unionist 30+ years 3 Trade Unions 2 countries
3. A former Labour County Councillor. 2013-2021
4. a Labour Party member since 2012
5. I have been fighting for the rights of disabled people both in the UK and at home in the USA where I grew up first as sibling to severely impaired sister
6. Postgraduate degree in Industrial Relation and Employment Law from Keele University through the TUC

My experience:

1. 30 years experience as a trade Unionist in 3 Unions in two countries
2. Regional chair Unison's Eastern Region Disabled Members Committee
3. Member of Unison's Disabled member's committee
4. Chair of Suffolk Coalition of Disabled People since 2014
5. Co-Vicechair Disability Labour
6. Co-chair Disability Labour
7. Member of the Eastern region Disability Network
8. Mental Health First Aid instructor MHFA-England

My personal goals for the executive committee:

1. To share my experiences
2. To share my contacts
3. To mentor my fellow executive members
4. To follow GDPR
5. To follow the Nolan Principles of Public Life
6. To follow the Labour Party Rules
7. To facilitate collaborative meetings
8. To foster good relations with the other Labour Party equality strands
9. To develop a Disability Labour education framework with other executive colleagues
10. To try to find alternative funding streams to pay for an education fund individual disabled members
11. To help executive committee members to develop high quality training materials as an incentive to affiliate to Disability Labour.
12. To leave the executive committee better than when I joined it

Jan Davidson

I would like to be part of Labour disability executive committee. I feel passionately for the plight of the marginalised I have worked as an RMN (registered mental nurse) for forty years NHS, private and independent sector. Each role bringing varied and valuable experience. I was a steward/ health and safety rep for the RCN (Royal college of Nursing) for twenty years. I have been a borough Councillor for in total seventeen years.I throughout my adult life have had bouts of indigenous depression which I dealt with , following my menopause I had a complete breakdown I experienced anxiety with my depression and agoraphobia. I retired on ill health. As a nurse I have mobility issues from lifting. Having got my act together I was asked to stand in a marginal seat. The branch are wonderful people but it became apparent that my fellow CLLRs found this irritating nothing was ever said but I have enough insight and life experience to know this was the case , perception isn't paranoia!. I won the seat and did a monthly surgery in the library attended local groups etc. I am a resourceful woman with good support and I'd like to enable/support comrades to grasp the nettle and be as good as they are and not be hindered by seen or unseen disability.

Kyle Eldridge

I wish to stand for election to your Executive Committee for two reasons, which are to serve and preserve Disability Labour as a platform for disabled Labour Party Members to do new and greater things in a 2024 Labour Government nationwide and we can only do that together if you vote for me today...

I have served the Labour Party since the Summer of 2018 being first an ordinary Party Member to being the following:

- Branch Membership Secretary
- Constituency Labour Party Youth Officer
- Local Campaigning Forum Council Observer
- Constituency Labour Party Secretary
- Labour Party Conference Youth Delegate

In my service to the Labour Party, I think I have demonstrated excellent organisation and negotiating skills in steering the Monmouth Constituency Labour Party to being seen as a marginal seat in the last Welsh Elections coming only 3,500 votes behind the Conservatives and Unionist Party in the county respectively. Furthermore, I have demonstrated teamworking skills in working with the new Constituency Labour Party Executive Committee of Monmouth in being their new secretary in best how to work on our successes as a Constituency Labour Party following on from the last election success. Finally, I have demonstrated the ability to work alone and this was done when I was the Labour Party Conference Youth Delegate being in the Conference Hall all alone whilst other

party members were absent and voting on motions on the future of the Labour Party respectively.

In preserving Disability Labour for 2024, I have worked for Leonard Cheshire since 2020 as a Change Maker which was a new digital themed programme ran by Leonard Cheshire using methods of citizen reporting and campaigning for change. This opportunity was for young people with any disability aged 16-25 who lived in or around the Swansea area. They trained me in journalism and reporting skills – to connect with disabled people in my community using digital tools – to explore issues they may have in access to their community, or anything else that comes up from living with a disability. Following this engagement they have coordinated and ran campaigns led by myself and the other 7 people in my reporting group to do two things: Raise awareness of these issues to the general public and connect with decision makers and influencers to see the change happen that they were looking for. This opportunity was ideal for anyone in this age group who wanted to learn new skills, connect with new people, and make some lasting change in their communities.

All of my work in and outside The Labour Party was during the time and still to the present day of me having an Autism Spectrum Disorder and a Obsessive Compulsive Disorder since 2011 and I have no intention of giving up to serve the Labour Party and Outside Bodies despite my challenges personally from a very young age.

I very much hope you consider voting for me, as I can demonstrate leadership for Disability Labour at this election and beyond.

Jonathan Farr

I am seeking re-election to the executive committee of Disability Labour having first been elected at the last AGM.

I first joined the Labour Party in the 1990s and at that time was a branch, district and county party secretary as well as a council election candidate. I only left the party when working in a politically restricted role. Whilst working in local government, I was a member of Unison and was a joint branch chair and convenor. My work with Unison resulted in the early termination of a major outsourcing contract and services being brought back in house. During my time with the council, I was responsible for a project to improve accessibility for bus services which resulted in moving the authority from having just 20% of bus stops having level access to having a figure of 90% in the space of 9 months.

On being made redundant from my council position due to austerity, I rejoined the Labour Party and once again became active. I became the Disability Officer and LGBTQ+ Officer for my CLP as well as serving on the Local Campaign Forum and being the election agent for the 2019 local elections and 2019 General election. I recently took over as the CLP Secretary at our CLP AGM.

I have been the treasurer of disability Labour since March 2020 and took over the responsibility for IT matters last autumn. As treasurer, I have introduced systems to improve the accounting for Disability Labour and automate the renewal process for CLP affiliation renewals.

I am also a member of the Co-operative Party and in 2020 was elected to their (Dis)ability Network Steering Committee.

I have hidden disabilities that result in my being disqualified from driving and am a live-in carer for a family member with mental health issues. I have firsthand experience of the effects of the decade of Tory austerity and the hostile environment against disabled people.

For too long disabled people have been let down and left behind by the Labour Party. We have constantly had barriers put in place, whether in attending meetings, standing for office, or attending conferences. 26 years after the Disability Discrimination Act and 11 years after the Equalities Act, Labour fails to give disabled people the rights and access they are legally entitled to.

The covid crisis has seen disabled people harder hit than the rest of society. It has however proven that online meetings can work. I believe that as things return to the “new normal” we need to learn the lessons of the last year. There is no longer any excuse not to allow remote participation in meetings, conferences etc.

If re-elected, I will push for the Labour Party to better recognize their responsibilities to disabled people, to ensure we have full access to Labour events and to ensure that remote participation is available as a reasonable adjustment. Labour needs to put disabled people at the heart of their policies. Nothing about us, without us.

Daniel Lee Harvey

My name is Daniel, and I am 28 years old. My disabilities started to have an impact on my life about 8 years ago. I was working in London for a renowned PR company as an intern. I had reached exhaustion point and was unable to support myself with the wage I was on. This is where this electricity for change kicked in and I could see clearly that there were still unnecessary complications around accessibility. I went on to work in education, neurodiversity, mental health, community support and youth services and I have been intrinsic within my own community as an activist and campaigner.

Throughout Lockdown, I've co-ordinated one of the biggest community support groups here in the UK. I have managed to successfully collaborate with independent businesses, support services, charities and NHS volunteers to ensure that we were able to diligently signpost and make contact with those in need within Suffolk.

I have unfortunately gone through experiences of discrimination due to my health/disability and I have found it interesting that the stigma attached is that it must be visible and instantly recognisable in characteristics. I don't fit into that and many of my symptoms are invisible to the human eye, yet they debilitate me. I really want to go into politics and use my voice with Disability Labour to help influence change.

I would like to be a part of the executive panel on Disability Labour as I have always been passionate about civil rights. This feels like the perfect platform and place which really embraces and celebrates accessibility... I would like to use my voice to monitor practices in party operations and to make room for disabled people to become

more actively involved in the world of politics. I would like to ensure that employers understand what it means to truly be “disability confident.” There are lots of talented disabled applicants that are being unsuccessful because employers don’t understand what being differently able means.

The pandemic has provided a welcome widespread change for me because employers are now realising that the productivity of their workforce is not affected by allowing employees the opportunity to work from home. In my opinion, it needs to be strongly considered as a reasonable adjustment particularly for disabled employees. I would like to improve accessibility by supporting the executive panel with encouraging the best possible practice in the provision of services and world of employment.

I am in this for the long run, and I would like to believe that this would be the right place for me to start and hopefully lead a successful career in politics. I want to learn and develop my skills and understanding with a team of people who just get it and follow and reflect similar passions to me. I would be honoured to be a part of this, and I would love to be involved in the decision making with regards to the rights and interests of disabled people.

John Hunt

John, www.johnhunt.wales known locally and by former students as the “punk professor” is an active environmentalist & professor of climate change forced into early medical retirement by a stroke (aged 42) terminating his active passions of marathon-& fell-running, caving, & Arctic expeditions. Fourteen years following his stroke he returned home to Wales from France where he lived with his ex-partner &-carer with whom he jointly set-up a rural gay social club.

Since “re-Welshing”– John was elected to DL exec for the 1st time in 2020 where he has been a Co-lead of Disability Labour [Wales] He has, actively contributed and engaged in scrutiny & disciplinary panels and has been promoting with Welsh Labour[& DL] an investigation into the shortfall of Disability Officers across Welsh CLPs; With ‘Disability Wales’ He is developing a campaign against barriers [in DWP] excluding the disabled from standing for elected Office. On the current exec John is currently co-Leading the subgroup exploring issues in the disabled & LGBTQ+ communities;. John, despite limitations of hemiplegic paralysis. is active in his constituency where he set-up a mobility community-group [“Blaenavon Wheelers”] to enable those mobility-challenged to share our issues victories & ideas and to form an advocacy forum to speak up for disabled people — especially addressing problems associated with outdoor-access for those using mobility-aids etc.

John is Torfaen CLP Disability Officer and vice-chair of his Local Authority[Torfaen] Access Forum & has recently been appointed a director-trustee of the Board of FareShareCymru (the national charity acting against food waste & food-poverty); He coordinates the Wheelers with our mobility-scooters, with & in a community food share scheme in association with The local Coop-stores. He is a

director of the local Workingmen' s Hall where he leads on matters associated with disability access/events

John's 1st Party activity [aged 9] was working with his MP Jim Callaghan to overcome threats to a local community science facility; On climate change he worked & wrote on projects variously for &with John Prescott and Michael Meacher; And as a district president of FoE he led one of the 1st successful anti bypass-scheme protests stopping an approved road project that threatened to diminish community retail footfall and obliterate UK's largest colony of native glow-worms. In 2021 John was placed on "The Welsh List" of potential candidates endorsed to seek constituency -selection in Senedd & Westminster parliamentary elections.

Cari Bishop Jones

Personal Statement to stand for election to the Disability Labour executive committee.

Hello,

I am a passionate disability activist and my aim, as always, is to highlight the injustices faced in day to day life for disabled people, to challenge the social exclusion of disabled people and to strive for equity of all people. I promote the social model of disability which reveals that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference.

Background:

Professionally, I was a social worker in both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands before becoming a psychotherapist. I currently live in South Wales. Until recently I was an active member of my professional bodies Diversity & Social Responsibility Committee, where I co-presented workshops in Conferences, and published articles including: *"The Politics of Challenges in Capacity"* - which I wrote in response to the governmental policy of austerity, the current benefits system, and the negative impact on people with disabilities.

Further of my published articles included a report on the BBC documentary "Silenced: The Hidden Story of Disabled Britain" which was written and presented by the disabled presenter Cerrie Burnell. My article highlights the fact that: *"For more than a century, one group of people in Britain has been shut out of society, denied basic human rights and treated with fear and prejudice."* where I use a quote from Cerrie and ask: "I wonder if the current disability activist slogan *"Nothing about us without out us"* needs to be added on to include: *"The [disabled] individual should not have to conform to society, society should bloody well change for you"* (Cerrie Burnell, 2021)."

Both my professional and political interests lie in particular unseen disabilities, power dynamics and access as a level playing field. I am currently the Disability Officer of Swansea West CLP (from 2018) which I use to encourage awareness of disability issues. I am also an active member of the Disabled Peoples Organisations in my local area.

I recently started a group called Care Costs Campaign Cymru (Wales) bringing together other Welsh disability activists. This was in response to the recent High Court judgment that concluded that a Norfolk local authority decision that increased care costs for severely disabled people, was discriminatory. Therefore this ruling is opening doors to enable disabled people to challenge the care charges of their local councils. I am working together with other UK groups who contribute to the same campaign.

I have worked as an executive member of Disability Labour for over a year now. I have built positive working relationships with other members of the executive, Disability Labour members in my area, and throughout the UK. I am keen to carry on to ensure that all disabled people have their say, to be heard by the powers that be, and that we are all acknowledged as valuable members of society.

Nigel Long

My name is Nigel Long and I have been disabled since I was 17. I have been a Labour councillor since 1987.

I am currently an advisor to the London Mayor's Housing Advisory panel advising on disability and social care.

In the 34 years of being a Labour councillor I have been a Council Leader, Deputy Leader, cabinet member.

I set up ACTION DISABILITY Training & Consulting to provide disability training to councils, other public bodies including health and housing providers.

Prior to that I was CEO of two disabled people's organisations for 9 years. I have also been Head of Policy for a national tenant's organisation, worked for housing organisations and co-operatives.

I have served on several ministerial groups and written national reports e.g. recommending the establishment of the National Tenants Voice.

There are 3 principle reasons for seeking election to the Labour Disability executive:

1. I don't believe the Labour party has a good enough relationship with the country's 16 million disabled people. We need to fill that vacuum and ensure Labour engages with disabled people locally and nationally. This should be both at a policy and an organisational level.
2. I am a supporter of empowering disabled people and want to promote independent living. I am a long standing opponent of care home provision, favouring community based care and support for disabled people.
3. I want to see Labour Disability influence all areas of party policy.

To develop an empowering offer to disabled people ranging from access to and support in the workplace to accessible housing, to tackling poverty and the lack of integrated care and support. I support funding social care from national taxation and the end of competitive commissioning of care and health services. We need to end the long term privatisation of social care and stop the current privatisation of NHS services.

Catherine Mcguinness

I am Catherine Maria Mcguinness, a 63year old disabled woman, my reasons for wanting to become active in Disability Labour are simple.

I want Disability where we should be, at the front, enabling and empowering people with Disabilities to have a loud voice that is heard.

I consider myself able to work towards putting disability firmly where it belongs at the top,

I know through working in local government as a frontline worker, where our needs are not being met, especially in social care for our elderly, our disabled, and our young,

A Trade unionist for 45years, activist for 34years, a chef in local government for 38 years, a low paid disabled woman, active Nationally, regionally, and at branch level in UNISON, and UNISON Disabled Members, where I was proud to be deputy co chair, and then chair of UNISON National Disabled Members Committee, as well as deputy chair of UNISON Northern Region Disabled Members, Self Organised Group.

In my branch at Newcastle City Council I was proud to hold the position of Equalities co-ordinator. Until my forced retirement from work due to my health/disabilities deteriorating.

I hold diplomas in employment law, equalities, and trade unionism, I am studying for degrees in social sciences, and psychology, and counselling. I have worked within mental health for 33years caring for elderly with Alzheimers and Dementia .I also do basic BSL, not only to native deaf users but also blind deaf users.

I am a very hands on person, I listen to people and they trust me because I care about fairness, honesty, and delivery of services tailored for peoples needs. I was brought up with labour in my veins through my grandfather's as coal face workers, and the docks labour

board, and my father with T.S.S.A. in British Rail, and still remain a proud labour party member.

I have spoken at UNISON local government, national delegate, women's, and disabled members conferences for many years, As well as TUC Disabled Members conference. I was active in getting UNISON disabled members 2 seats on their NEC, to enable our voices were heard. I received 15,000 views on a media clip done in my workplace celebrating a clients 100th birthday, and why we should care.

I am not afraid to ask questions, I am not afraid to ask for help, I don't pretend to have all of the answers. I am an approachable hands on person who believes we have to be visible to the many not the few. I make no difference of how I work from the richest to the poorest people I meet, I treat them all with the dignity and respect they deserve.

A vote for me, Catherine (Cath) McGuinness on Disability Labour is a vote to ensure, YOUR voice is heard.

Thank-you for the opportunity to be heard.

Theresa Vaughan

I have lived at my present address within the Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle CLP area for almost 26 years. During that time, I have joined the Labour Party, Co-operative Party, Unite the Union Community and Disability Labour. Recently I have been involved with the development of the Co-operative Party Equality Networks and was elected to the (dis)Ability Network Committee.

As a local Labour activist in Hull West and Hessle, I have held several executive positions.

- Ward Branch and CLP secretary.
- CLP Treasurer.
- CLP Vice Chair membership combined with acting CLP secretary.

Within Unite the Union, Humber Community branch.

- I am the present elected branch Chair.
- Branch secretary for 6 years.
- Branch delegate to Community Regional Forum.

As a Co-operative Party member,

- (dis)Ability Network Committee member and Secretary.
- Humber Branch delegate to the Hull West and Hessle CLP.
- Delegate to Hull LCF.
- Humber Branch secretary.
- Humber branch delegate to the Co-operative Yorkshire and Humber Regional Party.
- Executive positions held during the 12 years: -
 - Women's officer
 - Vice Chair.
 - At the 2013 National Conference I was elected by the Conference delegates to represent the Yorkshire and

Humber Region as a member of the Conference Arrangement Committee (CAC).

- 2017-18 Chair of the CAC.
- Executive Officer.

My working life was as a teacher, mental health nurse, political and community activist. I have witnessed how society and social policy has closed many of the Institutional Hospitals, removing residents, patients and staff into smaller group homes and individual flatlets, leading to isolation under the heading of care in the community. Many of the specialised care services, that had been provided were no longer available under the community care provision. For many centuries, the understanding of 'Disability' has generally been focused on the physical assessment of what an individual 'can't do' and not on the positive of what the individual 'can do'.

As a member of the Disability Labour executive, I can bring my experience as a disabled political activist to help in developing awareness of Disability Labour and assist in the building of a stronger National Network. Campaigning for the rights of disabled people and acknowledging that social policy, equality guidelines and Acts of parliament are nothing about us, without us.

Joseph Watkinson

I want to play my part in Disability Labour to ensure that we can use our voices with those in our movement and bring real change for us. My values of responsibility, equality, self-help, co-operation, solidarity were instilled in me from an early age. Brought up on a Nottinghamshire council estate, in a single-parent family with a twin brother who has lived with complex disabilities from birth, I worked in my local Co-op as a teenager, saving up money to get to University.

Having supported Jake for 25 years to maximise his potential, get access to the right care, and make his own voice heard in his health needs, being diagnosed myself in 2015 with fibromyalgia and the spinal condition Brown-Séquard Syndrome brought the reality of disability home more than I thought possible. After a quarter-century of navigating them with Jake, I was experiencing first-hand the prejudice and barriers across education, work and the welfare system.

Coronavirus has shone a light on how little our county has changed and still fails to support disabled people adequately. The health crisis has disproportionately affected our community, with many disabled people suffering, feeling abandoned by the government, and anxious about the future. Labour needs to be the voice keeping the Tory government to account for the treatment of disabled people and those who have been affected the most by COVID-19, the long covid suffers which I am one.

But we can do more. If elected to this role, I'll bring life-long experience as a young carer, fighting against barriers and disadvantages, and the understanding of our fight that gave me. We

need to be more proactive in ensuring both the diversity of disability and the powerful contributions disabled people bring are represented.

Last year I was elected to the Co-operative party Dis(ability) Networks Committee and I would love to see more interconnectivity on campaigns and work within our whole movement, together we are stronger. I am a GMB Union Branch Equality Officer and CLP Equality Officer. I have and will continue to champion our disabled members, ensuring representation at all levels in the party and the movement, bringing our voice to those in power.

Disability Labour is a beacon of hope, leading policy changes. Nobody should feel barred or dissuaded from contributing to our party and wider society because of physical or mental disability. I will continue to work with others to strengthen equal opportunity policies for the benefit of all.

Andrew Weston

Nothing about us without us, has never been more important. We have seen during the pandemic disabled people are often at the bottom of the priorities of public policy, and the Labour Party has not acted as the champion of disabled people as it should be.

I'm standing for the executive to try and help change that.

I was co-opted into the executive after the last AGM to improve our internal governance and how we build our policy work (how to influence the wider world e.g. MPs). A lot of my focus has been on governance from improving our complaints process to developing a new constitution consultation. These first steps were needed to build a foundation.

I'm asking for your support to be elected to build on this, focusing on policy work.

- I want to work to make disabled people a strong voice within the party and more widely. With a particular focus on trying to create the structures and the support to see more disabled people in positions of leadership across the party as it is impossible for us to be heard if we are not in the room!
- To increase our public campaigning presence, particularly looking for opportunities to work with disability advocacy groups, to magnify each other's voices and increase public awareness of important issues.

Combining this with continuing to improve our internal processes will I hope enhance the impact Disability Labour can make, and the say disabled people have in the Labour Party.

I believe I'm able to contribute to these goals based on

My background in policy work, I lead the policy team in one of the largest youth charities in the country. This, coupled with my wider background from a career in third sector policy work gives me the

skills to plan how to influence figures within the Labour Party, to develop campaigns, and programmes that will drive change.

My background in coproduction and advocacy, I am a trustee of the advocacy charity VoiceAbility, and an experienced social researcher with a focus on coproduction, ways to make sure those who are often ignored in decision-making have an equal say. This gives me the skills to help magnify the voice of disabled people within Disability Labour and the Labour Party.

My commitment to the wider Labour Party and the labour movement, I believe Labour should always be at the forefront tackling the hardest questions, and building up those who the current system pushes down. We are at our strongest when we are willing to be radical, and push for real change. Part of that is about creating a model that works for disabled people empowering one of the most marginalised voices in society but it must also be wider. I feel this mindset gives me the drive I need to help improve the party for the better.

Combined my skills, socialist principles and, lived experiences as a disabled person put me in a good position to make a difference to the work of the executive.