

Disabled people were secretly given Do Not Resuscitate orders

[Dan Barker](#)

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Disabled Scots felt like their lives were 'not worth saving' during the pandemic after Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders were secretly imposed on many of them, an inquiry has heard.

As Covid began to spread, GP receptionists even called up those with disabilities to try to persuade them to sign up to the orders, which inform doctors that they do not want their lives saved in an emergency.

[Glasgow](#) Disability Alliance chief executive Tressa Burke also told the Scottish [Covid-19](#) Inquiry how some of her members were left so isolated during lockdowns they feared their bodies would not be discovered if they died at home.

Lord Brailsford's inquiry in [Edinburgh](#) is specifically probing the use of DNRs as part of its terms of reference.

Giving evidence, Ms Burke said: 'Some people were finding out about DNRs because their GP surgery were approaching them, some were finding out because they discovered it while they were in hospital, or when something happened to them they discovered it in passing.

'So people were absolutely terrified and felt that the lives of disabled people were being devalued.



Tessa Burke said some disabled people were so isolated during lockdown they thought their bodies may never be discovered if they died at home

'Even the way it was being described when people were dying – “but they had a pre-existing condition” – as if that somehow writes off their life and devalues it and we should just expect all the disabled people to die anyway, and they're not that worth saving.

'And coupled with this there were the experiences of people being told they wouldn't be taken to hospital if they got Covid and they wouldn't be given access to ventilators.

'So there was a lot of fear, a lot of people distressed and terrified because of this, and the DNRs compounded it.'

The inquiry heard how some disabled people were coerced into having a DNR on their medical record.

Ms Burke described how one family were horrified after their elderly mother got a call from her GP's surgery and agreed to a DNR because 'she thought that's what the receptionist wanted her to agree with'.

The charity chief said: 'She was supported by her daughters to call her surgery back and have that changed. But how many people were persuaded or went along with it?'

Lord Brailsford was also told yesterday how many disabled people feared being left to die at home alone as Covid ripped through their communities. Ms Burke, whose organisation looks after the interests of more than 5,500 members living with disabilities, said: 'People thought if they caught it they would just die.'

'Many of our members were also worried that if they died, that because they were so isolated in their lives before the pandemic, that nobody would find them and nobody would know because we were the only people in touch with them.'

'So that was a real fear for people, some were absolutely terrified.'

The inquiry continues.

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