**Thoughts on the Government Response:**

* It has become fashionable in some quarters to dismiss experts and to de-legitimate important international structures and institutions.
* In a league table of international institutions the UN would surely come near the top and whatever their shortcomings we dismiss such institutions at our peril
* Yet this is precisely what the govt has done in its response to the findings of UN Disability C’ttee inquiry: - rejecting all the report’s findings and recommendations and in the process casting doubt on the 3,000 pages of documented evidence it analysed - much of which has come from Parliament itself through committee’s such as the JCHR, Work & Pensions committee.
* The govt also stated that the document demonstrated "an outdated view of disability which is patronising and offensive".
* Disabled people and our organisations beg to differ.
* This is a damming report from the UN that only hints at the misery and hardship we know Disabled people are experiencing right now.
* The position of the govt in their response is one of blanket denial . For example the govt denies there is a social care crisis and states social care funding is adequate - yet we all know just a few months on that this position is now politically untenable – the truth is out / the genie cannot be put back in the bottle - the crisis in social care is undeniable and visible
* Unfortunately, the govt response to the Inquiry findings regarding right to an adequate standard of living and social protection and the right to work are equally unconvincing – the same dismissive blanket rejection of the UN findings.
* The Government goes on to criticise the inquiry for having too narrow a focus and says it misses measures that have improved Disabled people’s lives, giving examples such as personalisation, and increased accessibility and housing.
* We would argue that retrogression has actually occurred *across all the* Articles and we welcome the opportunity provided by the periodic review to submit evidence on these.
* The govt response also fails to deal with the specific nature of many of the criticisms advanced in the Committee’s Report, for example it completely ignores the criticism that the roll out of welfare reform measures “included the issuing of statements by high-ranking officers that the reform was aimed at making the welfare system fairer taxpayers…and reducing benefit fraud” and yet the inquiry found no substantiation off the alleged benefit fraud by Disabled people. (85)
* It is also fairly galling for the Government to argue its concern for Disabled people’s rights by citing mitigation measures that have only come about through pressure and campaigning by Disabled people, eg:
* Inclusion of Article 19 in the statutory guidance
* Exemption from the Spare Room Subsidy Removal for Disabled children
* In reality things are getting worse for Disabled people since the inquiry reported in October 2015 rather than better : Disabled people are braced to suffer:
1. The cut to ESA for those in WRAG group
2. The removal of the Severe Disability Premium through Universal Credit
3. Benefits freeze affecting ESA WRAG, JSA, housing benefit, Universal Credit
4. The proposed 80 % cut in funding for future employment support
5. Further cuts to Local Authority social care budgets on top of the current shortfall in social care funding of £4.7billion
6. The emergence of CHC policies by over 40 CCG’s, and possibly many more, that could see disabled people with complex healthcare needs shunted into residential or nursing homes against their wishes.
7. Deep and serious concerns about the integration of health and work detailed in the Green paper including extending conditionality to Disabled people in the ESA Support group and ethical questions posed by the adoption of employment as a clinical outcome
* We are now in a situation where though Disabled people make up just 19% of the population over 50% of all people in poverty are either disabled people or live in a household with a disabled member
* Things must change. If Theresa May is to succeed in her commitment to work for the powerless then the govt must restore justice and fairness to its policies affecting our community
* The govt must end this default position of denial
* It must acknowledge the mountain of evidence showing the negative, disproportionate and cumulative impact of its policies on Disabled people
* It must accept the crisis that is facing social care and independent living – and make the political choice to fund a system free at the point of need, fit for the 21c that genuinely delivers independent living
* It must acknowledge that the current one size fits all assumption that everyone is better off in work , and that not working is a lifestyle choice that justifiably results in the removal of benefits simply does not reflect the reality of disabled peoples lives– its illness and discriminatory attitudes and working practices that prevent Disabled people from working and to penalise Disabled people for these causes, out of our control, as forthcoming ESA /WRAG cut does is punitive, unfair and unjust.

* This govt purports to recognise and believe in the role of the state as investor, facilitator and agent of justice and fairness
* This positive role must now be brought to bear on its policies and work with Disabled people.
* The govt must stop the dismantling of our rights, dignity, equality and inclusion and begin to work with us- to restore justice and fairness to the policies that affects us and to find the real and effective solutions we need to end exclusion and discrimination and get us once again on the road to equality and inclusion.