

Left Out and Locked Down



Scotland In Lockdown:
Stories from Disabled People and People
with Long Term Health Conditions



Acknowledgments

The stories in the booklets come from people who shared their experiences as part of the Scotland in Lockdown study, without whom this work would not be possible. The work was completed by a large team of researchers at the University of Glasgow and funded by the Chief Scientist Office (Scotland). You can find out more about this study here: <https://scotlandinlockdown.co.uk/>.

The booklets were produced by Dr Caitlin Gormley, Dr Phillippa Wiseman, and Dr Nughmana Mirza who are all based within the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow. All three were co-investigators on the Scotland in Lockdown study and they wanted to bring these stories together in an accessible and creative way with the help of Research Assistants Molly Gilmour, April Shaw and Nicola Ceesay. This project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's Impact Acceleration Accounts.

This series was illustrated, and made possible, by Sophia Neilson, a Scottish-based ethnographic artist and illustrator. You can find more of her work online @soofillustrates or www.soofillustrates.com.

The series was translated into French by Jennifer Rieck and into Urdu and Arabic with the support of Amina: The Muslim Women's Resource Centre.



University
of Glasgow

In March 2020 Scotland went into lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were all asked to 'stay at home', 'stay safe' and 'protect the NHS', and were told that we were 'all in it together'. This was not the case for people who were already marginalised and isolated, who faced even more hardship and inequality as a result of the pandemic restrictions.



This collection focuses on four communities who spoke to us for the 'Scotland in Lockdown' study, including:

Disabled people and
people with long
term health
conditions



People with
refugee status or seeking
asylum and experiencing
destitution



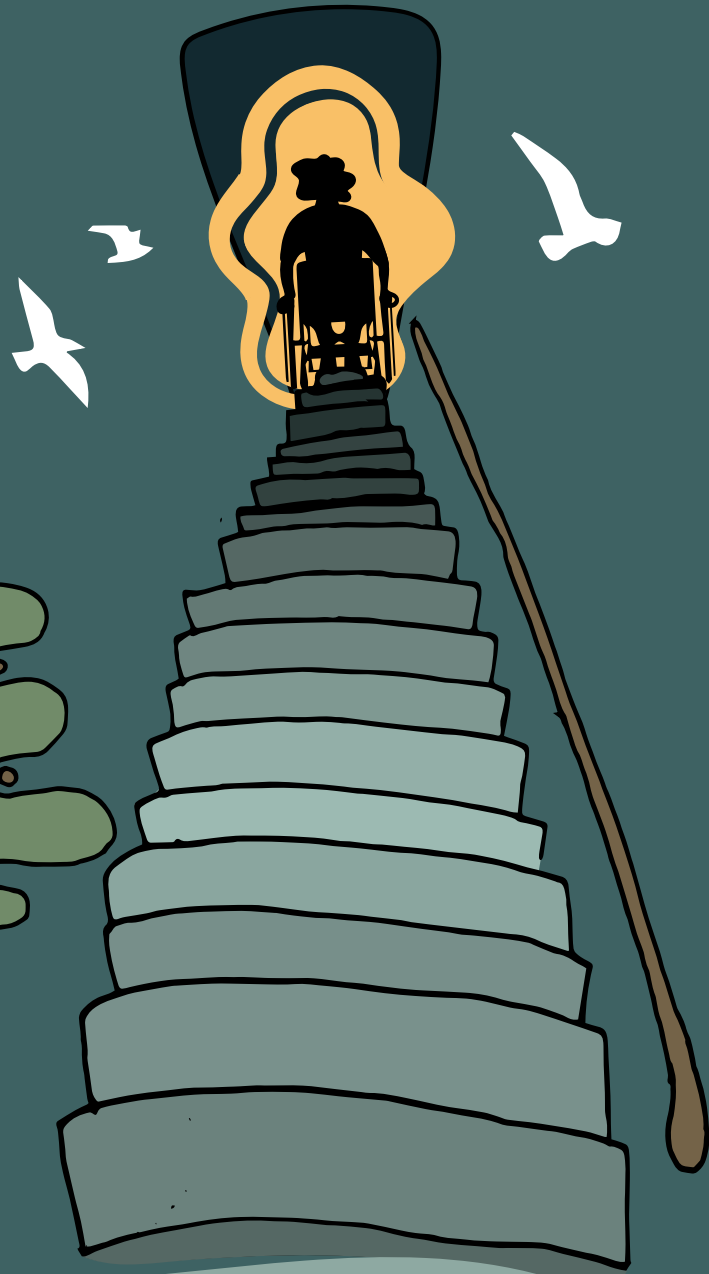
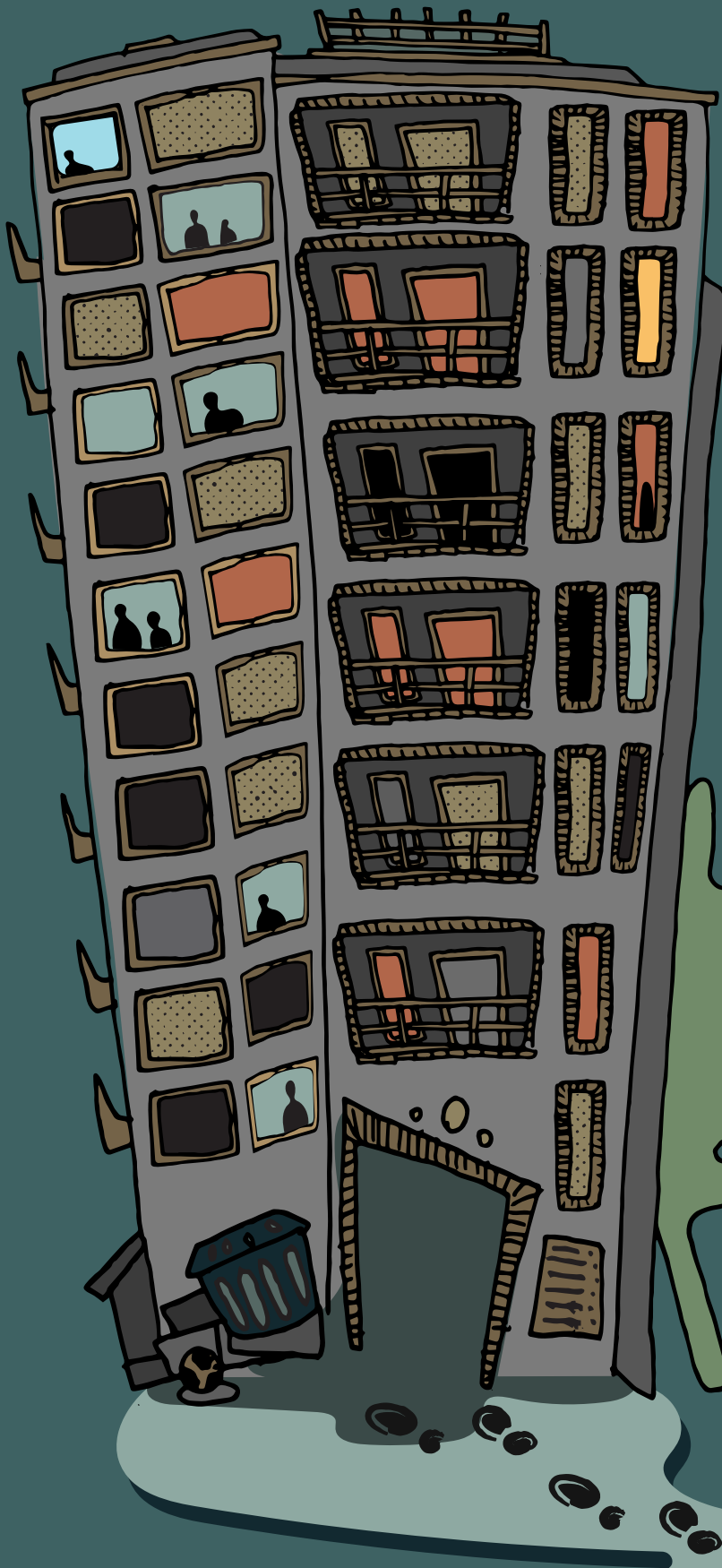
People in the criminal
justice system

Survivors of domestic
abuse and
sexual violence



The images that follow represent the stories that they told us about life in lockdown.

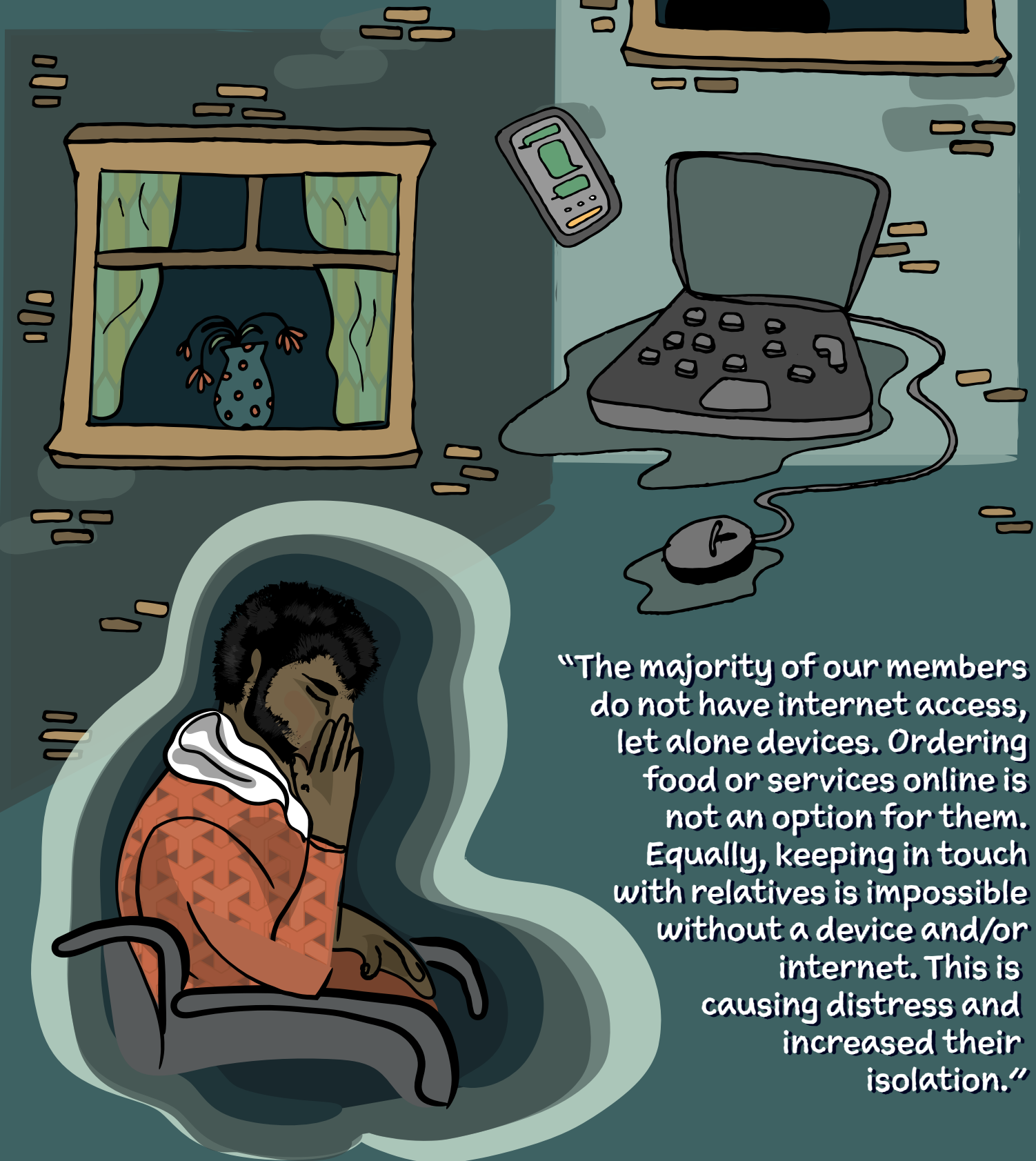
180,000 shielding letters were sent to people categorised as 'extremely clinically vulnerable.' Shielders were advised to stay at home and minimise contact with other people.



Government information was unclear and inconsistent. Disabled people were forced to decide for themselves whether or not to shield.

"I've been essentially shielding because my kind of illness doesn't fit into the categories of shielding. I've just been keeping away from everybody, I'm not officially on the list."

“Our members tend to be isolated for a range of reasons: no close links with families or friends. This is essential and helps them with their mental as well as physical health. Lockdown has meant that some people were without support for weeks.”

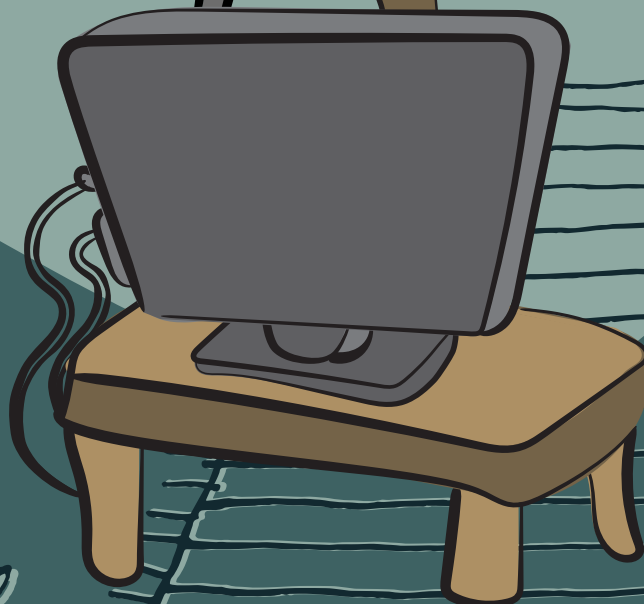


“The majority of our members do not have internet access, let alone devices. Ordering food or services online is not an option for them. Equally, keeping in touch with relatives is impossible without a device and/or internet. This is causing distress and increased their isolation.”

Disabled people did not get information that was understandable or easy to read. People with learning disabilities were neglected because information was inaccessible.



"I think the government should explain, like the understanding for us disabled people, because sometimes we find it very difficult to understand... I wish they would give us leaflets with full guides, like pictures and words in, and it's more clear and more sense."



Wearing a mask was just not an option for everyone.



“Some people resent and sometimes they judge people if they’re not wearing a mask. It’s like, oh, they should be wearing a mask at all times, Nicola Sturgeon says so...”

...I think sometimes people get excluded from that if they’re not wearing a mask, and it’s like carrying that burden, thinking, oh, it’s my fault, I didn’t wear a mask, but people just don’t consider other people’s feelings when they’re out and about.”



(Sunflower lanyard signalling hidden disabilities)

The pandemic put enormous pressure on disabled families, many of whom were already struggling and marginalised.



"We don't get very much respite at all and the small amount that we do get has been stopped and who knows when that'll be back."



"Not knowing what's coming and how it's going to affect me and my ability to look after myself and my kid... it's been really hard feeling like I'm not being the mum that I want to be."

Being physically distant meant that in-person support had to stop. Having less personal support made it much harder for disabled people to feel connected, live equally and independently.



Some disabled people felt the move online opened up opportunities for connections

"It's all on zoom now. It's fantastic... I've been able to connect with my community... I've done so much"



**Many vital support services stopped during lockdown.
Organisations stepped in to fill that gap.**

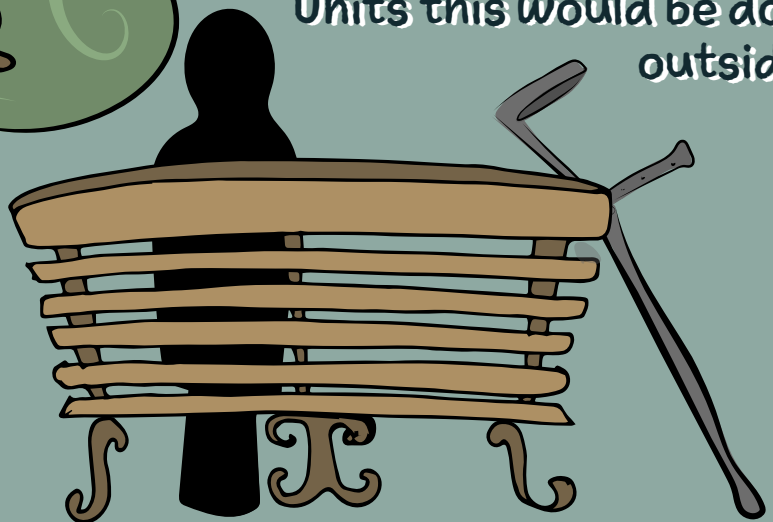
**"If I didn't have my
carers coming in, I
wouldn't have seen
anybody."**




**People who needed
support were scared,
isolated, and lonely.**




**"In a crisis, we met with
people face-to-face with
adequate protection and
safety measures in place.
When we visit members at
Assessment and Treatment
Units this would be done
outside."**



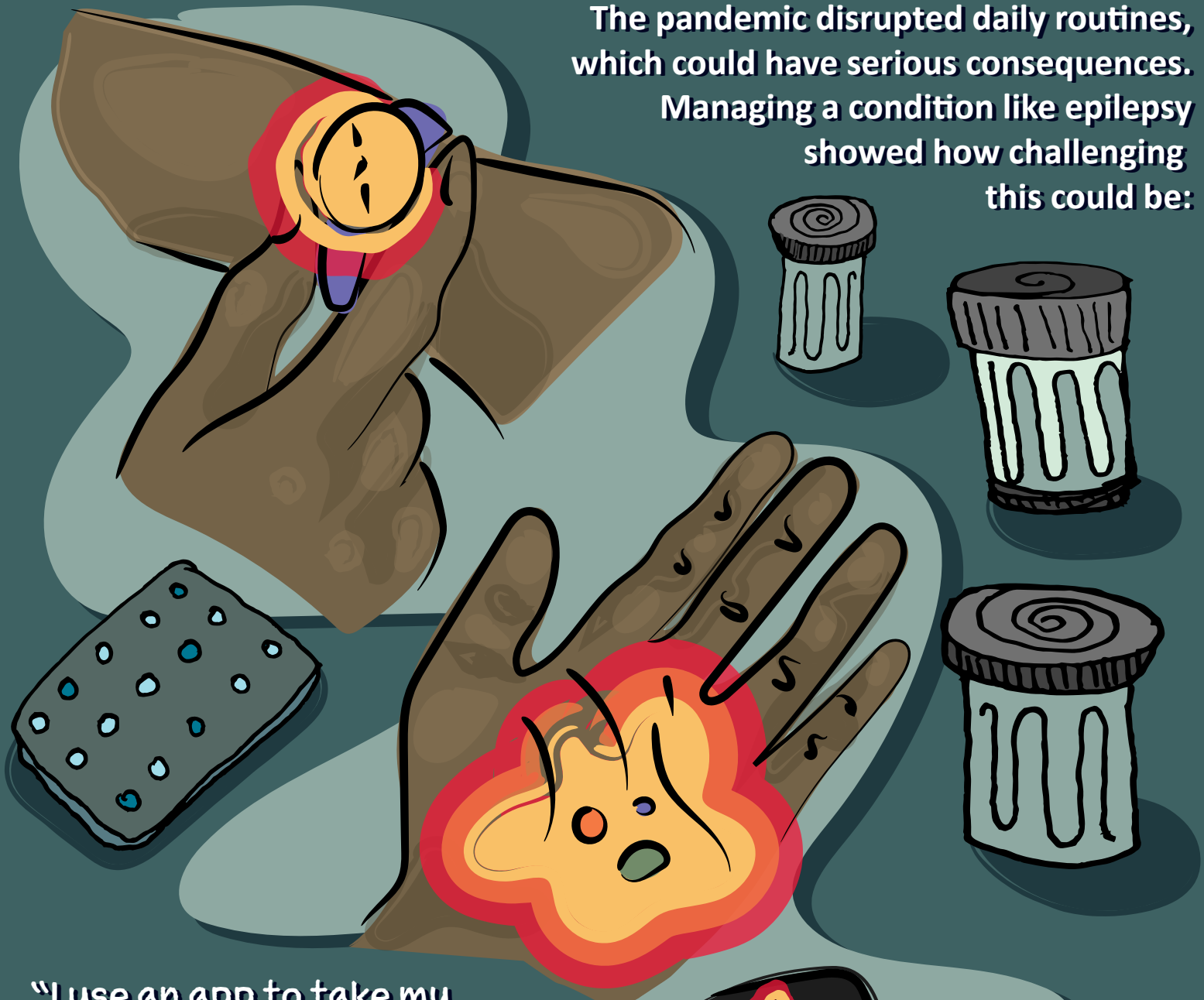
A woman with red hair in a bun, wearing a green patterned top and a stethoscope, is on a phone call. She has a frustrated expression and is holding a blue pill bottle in her other hand. A yellow coiled line representing a phone cord extends from her phone towards the bottom right.

Remote GP appointments were not suitable for everyone. Some people were concerned their conditions would not be monitored and could deteriorate.

A woman wearing a brown hijab and a white lab coat with a stethoscope is sitting at a desk with a laptop. She has a stressed expression and is holding a white pill to her mouth. A yellow coiled line representing a phone cord extends from the top left towards her.

"I actually found myself getting angry and I found myself getting really stressed and it was simply like ordering things like insulin only to discover my doctor's surgery was closed. I was really stressed because I have no choice, I need insulin to stay alive"

The pandemic disrupted daily routines, which could have serious consequences. Managing a condition like epilepsy showed how challenging this could be:



"I use an app to take my meds, but at the time, I've also noticed that I'll also sometimes forget, or I'll just press the app to say that I've taken my meds, but I've, I might have just forgotten. I honestly can't tell... so I think I've definitely forgotten a few times, or even, doubled."



"I saw the queues. Walking's painful but standing's excruciating because when I stand still for any length of time, it can be, like, 20 seconds. It's so uncomfortable to just... to stand in a queue."



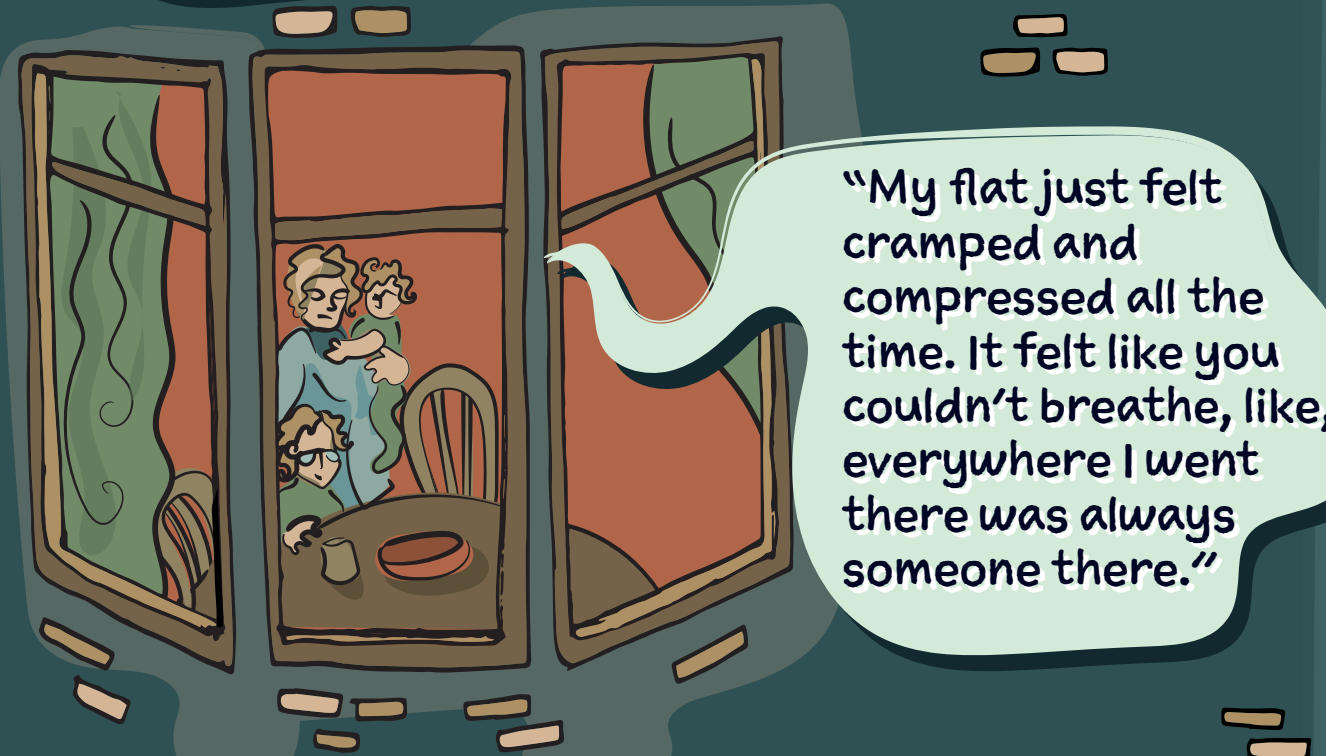
"I really can't manage to carry the shopping up the stairs... I ended up crawling up the stairs with the stuff that needed to go in the fridge, like the meat and stuff. I just sat on the floor in my kitchen and cried before I had the energy to put anything away. Two days later, there's still stuff strewn all up the stairs. A friend came to visit, and he put a load of stuff away for me."



Restrictions prevented disabled people from going out for far longer than any other group.



“Days just blurred into one another. The only real major outside contact was going to my GP or going to a psychiatrist. That was literally the only times I’d leave the flat. So I just, sort of, lost all sense of what day of the week it was”



“My flat just felt cramped and compressed all the time. It felt like you couldn’t breathe, like, everywhere I went there was always someone there.”



"I genuinely feel like disabled people have just been abandoned, forgotten about and left to try and survive as best we possibly can."



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'Thank You to our Partner Organisations

Aid & Abet

Amina The Muslim Women's Resource Centre

Crohn's & Colitis UK

Diabetes Scotland

Empower Women for Change

Faith in Community Scotland

Families Outside

Glasgow Disability Alliance

Govan Community Project

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

Maryhill Integration Network

People First (Scotland)

Safe in Scotland

Scotland Versus Arthritis

Scottish Refugee Council

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

SOLD

Scottish Prisoners' Advocacy and Research Collective

The Poverty Alliance

Women's Support Project





Disabled people and those with long term health conditions form a diverse group in Scotland. We spoke to 40 people including disabled people, people with learning disabilities, and people managing long-term health conditions, and 5 supporters from organisations working with these communities. This group experienced inequalities and barriers to realising their rights to live with dignity that were made worse through the pandemic.