

DISABLED MOTHERS' RIGHTS CAMPAIGN



to have
& keep
our kids

Charter of Rights

Disabled women are not unfit mothers.

**End discrimination by social services
and the family courts.**

**Our legal rights – and our children's –
must be implemented!**

- 1. Women with disabilities have a right to start a family and keep our children.** Our children have a right to be raised by their mother and family, not be denied her love and care due to prejudice.
- 2. We have a right not to be discriminated against** just for being disabled, of colour, immigrant, LGBTQI+, working class, single, a sex worker, on benefits, survivors of violence and abuse, we grew up in state 'care' . . .
- 3. Support us in pregnancy. Maternity care must be tailored to our needs.** Pregnant disabled women wanting to be mums are typically offered an abortion. We suffer discrimination and neglect in childbirth and maternity care generally, especially if we are also women of colour, leading to deaths, disabilities and health problems.
- 4. Support services under the Care Act and Children Act must be obligatory.** We must be given information about how to get that support, and have non-discriminatory assessment of our needs as a family. End care charges for adult support services.
- 5. All meetings and hearings in 'child protection' and/or family court proceedings must be made accessible,** so we can have our say.
- 6. Court hearings must be open to the public** so courts are accountable for the treatment we are receiving. Anonymity can be applied, as in rape trials.
- 7. Mothers, overwhelmingly the primary carers, must never be cut off benefits. Disabled mothers must be guaranteed sufficient benefits for disability costs and our children's needs,** as well as a Care Income for the work of raising children. Including mothers who share care with ex-partners. Child poverty is deliberate state neglect not neglect by mothers.

Endorsers: *Organisations:* Alliance for Inclusive Education; Camden Disability Action; the Chronic Collaboration; Difference North East; Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty; Elfrida Society; Flightback; Inclusion London; Parents, Families & Allies Network ; Support Not Separation (includes All African Women's Group, English Collective of Prostitutes, Global Women's Strike (GWS), Lactation Consultants of Great Britain, Milk of Human Kindness, Payday men's network, Psychotherapy & Counselling Union, Scottish Kinship Care Alliance, Single Mothers' Self-Defence, Soul Sisters: empowering people, Women Against Rape, Women of Colour in the GWS, Give Us Back Our Children - Los Angeles & Philadelphia). *Individuals:* Prof. Andy Bilson; Taliah Drayak, Co-chair & founder Society for Family Preservation; Sahera Khan, artist/actor; Don O'Neal, adult social care user/campaigner/author; Tina Rodwell, independent disability advocate; Joy Dove, campaigner for justice for her daughter Jodey Whiting.

Disabled Mothers' Rights Campaign (DMRC) is co-ordinated by **WinVisible** (women with visible and invisible disabilities) and is part of **Support Not Separation**

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Blog: <https://winvisible.org/disabled-mothers-rights-campaign> **Tel:** 020 7482 2496

Thanks to our funder:



1. Women with disabilities have a right to family life.

Our right to start a family is upheld by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 23). Children are bonded to mothers, disabled or not. Separating children from loving mothers is cruel and unjust. Mothers need practical support, not to have our children taken. Children and mothers are traumatised for life. Many of us never have children due to discrimination and overwhelming obstacles. Those who are unable to cope must be allowed to maintain the relationship with our children, whoever has custody of them.

2. We have a right not to be discriminated against.

NHS and social services professionals often treat us as unfit mothers. We're told we are a risk: if we are deaf we can't hear the baby cry; if we are blind we can't see the baby; if we have mobility disabilities we can't run after our children. Women with learning disabilities are *54 times more likely to have our children taken from us* (C5 News). Discrimination is even worse if we're single mothers, of colour, immigrant, suffer domestic violence... Yet many of us raise children safely and successfully, including with help from family or friends.

3. We have a right to support in pregnancy and maternity care tailored to our needs.

Women with disabilities who are pregnant have been immediately offered abortion (C4 News). Many say that NHS services are not geared to our needs, staff are taken aback if we get pregnant. Physical accessibility and communication are poor or non-existent. Medical neglect is rife. We are disbelieved and even abused in maternity, especially if we are also women of colour ([Disparities in maternity care for disabled women in the UK](#), March 2025; [Black Maternal Health](#), September 2025). We and our babies suffer worse consequences.

4. We have a right to supportive services.

All mothers are entitled to support, especially if we have a disability. Instead, social workers deny us support, assuming we're unable to cope. We are accused of 'child neglect' and put under 'child protection' – our children under threat of being taken. We are told we pose a risk to our children because they may have to help with our care in the future, but our children would rather be with their mothers. We are told that supporting our family is too costly, yet councils are bankrupted spending millions on privatised children's homes run by profiteer companies.

All disabled mothers who ask for support must get it under the Care Act s12 and Children Act s17. Local authorities must provide respectful support tailored to the needs of each individual and family, not based on prejudices and budgets. We are the experts in our own situation and know what we and our children need. We should be told what support we are entitled to and get help to apply. Adult social care must be free – charges taken from our disability benefits impoverish us and cause us to drop out of care we need.

5 & 6. We have a right to accessible meetings and court hearings.

Disabled mothers are severely disadvantaged in all proceedings due to lack of access in communication, no time to read documents... Family courts must follow the Equality Act and Human Rights Act. We must be able to understand and have our say, and to have an independent advocate of our choice. Disability adjustments in court under [Practice Direction 3AA](#) must be granted and not be used to claim we are unable to look after our children. Expert witnesses must be specialists in the mother's or child's condition. Court hearings must be open to the public so there is accountability. Anonymity protection, the same as in rape trials, can be applied.

7. We have a right to benefits, healthcare and a Care Income for mothers.

Most disabled mothers are impoverished – targeted by cuts to disability benefits, the benefit cap, Universal Credit sanctions, unjustly cut off or denied benefit. This results in worse health, debt and/or resorting to sex work to survive. Disabled mothers with shared or part-time care of our children lack resources and incur disability costs for contact visits. Some have tragically starved (Lilian Oluk) or taken our own life (Jodey Whiting, Philippa Day). Asylum-seekers and other immigrant mothers must be able to access benefits and free healthcare just like other mothers. Abolish 'No Recourse to Public Funds' and NHS charges targeting maternity services, which risk ill-health, birth disabilities and even death. Coping with our own disabilities and ill-health is hard work in itself. Mothers and all other carers deserve a Care Income for the vital work of raising children.