

# Covid risk higher for disabled

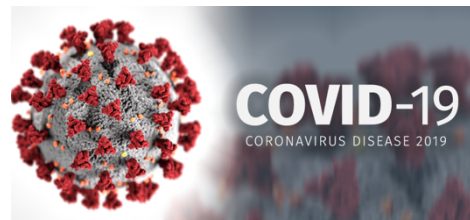
Article from The Press 11/3/23

People who received disability support services in 2022 were 13 times as likely to die from Covid-19 than the general population, new data shows.

Manatū Ora – Ministry of Health has released a report about the burden of Covid-19 in the disabled population who receive Disability Support Services (DSS).

It analysed data from 43,000 people who received DSS between 1 January to 16 November 2022.

The data showed that while those on disability support were around 9% less likely to contract Covid-19 they were 4.2 times more likely to be hospitalised because of Covid and 15 times as likely to die from the virus compared to the general population.



New Zealand Disability Support Network chief executive officer Peter Reynolds said the report highlighted disabled people's heightened vulnerability to Covid-19, and the need for better data on their health.

"While the data is limited to only a subsection of disabled people, it shows the importance of the steps taken by disability providers, in conjunction with government agencies to protect disabled people from exposure to Covid-19," he said.

"Disabled people frequently have medical conditions that make them more at risk from Covid-19, but this can be mitigated against by vaccinations, PPE and other protective measures."

Reynolds said the Government needed to continue to support the efforts of disability providers to reduce the chances of disabled people catching Covid-19.

But he said the analysis had serious limitations and the true impact of Covid-19 on the disability community was still not known.

"The fact that disability status is not linked to people's National Health Index number meant that data for 97% of disabled people could not be analysed," he said.

Only Covid data for the relatively small proportion of people who receive Disability Support Services was available. This shows the need for better joined up data collection."