



HOUSE OF LORDS

Revised transcript of evidence taken before

The Select Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability

Inquiry on

EQUALITY ACT 2010 AND DISABILITY

Evidence Session No. 5

Heard in Public

Questions 52 - 59

TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2015

3.20 pm

Witnesses: Elliot Dunster and Paul Farmer

Members present

Baroness Deech (Chairman)
 Baroness Brinton
 Baroness Browning
 Lord Faulkner of Worcester
 Lord Foster of Bishop Auckland
 Lord Harrison
 Baroness Jenkin of Kennington
 Lord McColl of Dulwich
 Lord Northbrook
 Baroness Pitkeathley
 Baroness Thomas of Winchester

Examination of Witnesses

Mr Elliot Dunster, Group Head of Policy, Research and Public Affairs, Scope, and **Mr Paul Farmer**, Chief Executive, Mind

Q52 The Chairman: Good afternoon, Mr Dunster and Mr Farmer. Thank you very much for coming to see us. We have read your evidence with interest. May I just remind you that the session is open to the public, and a webcast of the session goes out live as an audio transmission and is subsequently accessible on the parliamentary website? A verbatim transcript will be taken of the evidence and will be put on the parliamentary website. A few days after this session, you will be sent a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy and it would be very helpful to us if you could advise us of any corrections as quickly as possible. If, after this evidence session, you wish to clarify or amplify any points you made during your evidence, or have any additional points to make, you are welcome to submit supplementary evidence to us.

May I now ask you to introduce yourselves? In turn, when we ask questions we will declare at the start any relevant interests that we have relating to this inquiry. Mr Dunster, could you introduce yourself, please?

Mr Dunster: Thank you very much. My name is Elliot Dunster. I work for the disability charity, Scope. We are a pan-disability charity representing disabled people in England and Wales. Thank you very much for inviting us to give evidence here today. Did you want some introductory comments as well, or is an introduction okay?

The Chairman: No, they will come out during the questioning.

Mr Farmer: I am Paul Farmer. I am Chief Executive of the mental health charity, Mind.

Q53 The Chairman: Thank you. Perhaps this question is more directed at Mr Farmer than Mr Dunster. Some witnesses to the inquiry have suggested that both employers and disabled people, either in employment or who want to be in employment, can be unclear about what reasonable adjustments are possible for those with mental health issues. How might this be remedied?

Mr Farmer: I suppose our starting point is our very strong support for the principles and intentions behind the Equality Act. We think that certain elements of it have made a significant difference to people with mental health problems, particularly some of the clarifications of definitions in the transition between previous legislation and this legislation. It is in this area of supporting people with mental health problems in employment where we

have certainly heard people being extremely unclear. Let me expand a little. For employers, I think the issue of defined lists of reasonable adjustments is not necessarily helpful. I think they are helpful as indicators and support ideas for supporting people, but sometimes that puts people into the context of having to decide what is or is not “reasonable”, whereas the starting point for a conversation with somebody with a mental health problem is often, “What is the kind of support you need to sustain you in work?”. This is hugely important. If the current Government are to achieve their ambition of halving the disability employment gap, when about 40% of people with mental health problems find themselves out of work, the need to tackle this is going to be hugely significant. From an employer point of view this creates a lack of clarity for people.

For individuals, there are two issues. First of all, as our written submission suggested, there is quite a low level of knowledge amongst the public generally of their entitlements under the Equality Act. Secondly, people often still feel intimidated by the stigma around mental health, which makes it difficult for them to disclose, whereas the Equality Act protects them through their act of disclosure and entitles them potentially to additional help and support. Our sense is that from both an employer and employee point of view, we have not quite managed to get this right in the actual working of effective reasonable adjustments for people with mental health problems.

The Chairman: Could this be clarified for employers? Does there need to be more guidance or more examples?

Mr Farmer: I think some guidance would be really helpful, including the recommended process that somebody might go through and signposting to areas of help and support. For example, we know that Access to Work will fund reasonable adjustments for people with mental health problems, yet on the latest evidence only between 4% and 5% of the Access to Work budget supports people with mental health problems. Help is at hand and plenty of information and support is available, but it needs some bringing together so that employers can be clear about the simple steps they can take.

Q54 Baroness Browning: I should have declared—it is in the register—my interest in several autism charities. I wonder if I could ask you to take a step back before people get into employment, before they get the job offer? There is a great gap. An awful lot of money and services go into being work ready, work preparation, preparing your CV, and then everybody ticks the box and walks away from the person. They are then left to go through the most difficult part, which is the actual application, which today, with so many large companies, is online, so they are suddenly faced with having to produce references online, things that many of them find very difficult to do and may not even have if it is their first job. Then there is the whole question of the interview process. When we talk about reasonable adjustments, for many people with learning disabilities, communication disorders such as autism, people with long-term mental health problems, quite often that reasonable adjustment would be to have some pre-briefing of the person doing the interview, even on some occasions to have somebody accompanying them to the interview. Is that reasonable adjustment? Is that why only 15% of adults with autism are actually in paid employment? Why is there this gap at this critical stage? Is there anything you can recommend that would help to plug that gap?

Mr Farmer: We would certainly agree with you that is often a gap. The best evidence that we have seen in mental health is the application of IPS programmes—individual placement and support—which are personalised and localised programmes that work with the individual right the way through their employment journey. These are well-evidenced programmes and are currently delivering a back-to-work return rate of between 25% and

30% compared to the current effectiveness of the Work Programme of between 10% and 13% for people with mental health problems. Part of the reason why they are successful is because they stay with people both before and after they get a job, so they are in an environment where they can have a conversation around reasonable adjustments.

The second area that we have talked about previously on occasion, and it is particularly relevant to this conversation, is the idea of passporting your reasonable adjustment. We have seen examples of this, particularly in the broadcasting and creative industries, where staff are often on short-term contracts but will work across different organisations, such as the BBC, ITV and Sky. As a group of employers they came together to recognise the passporting of the support from Access to Work, which is in essence a reasonable adjustment. That cuts out a huge amount of bureaucracy for the employer, but it also gives the employee a greater degree of confidence. It means that when the employee comes to a job interview, they are able to say to their prospective employer, "Not only are you getting me but you're actually getting the support that I need to be able to work effectively in this workplace". Of course, workplaces differ and sometimes there is a need for an adjustment to the adjustment, but on the whole the workplaces will be similar, and the kinds of adjustments, particularly for people with non-visible disabilities, which are often about being able to take a break, having appropriate space around your desk and being able to work flexible hours, are not that difficult to put into place.

The Chairman: Mr Dunster, did you want to come in?

Mr Dunster: I completely agree with your point and with everything that Paul has said. I want to add a couple of things. The Government are in the process of deciding on the future of back-to-work support post-April 2017. Scope delivers Work Choice, which is the Government's largest specialist disability employment support programme. We strongly believe that there does need to be a specialist disability employment programme for disabled people, and that enables us to do some of the things that you are describing. I can think of some examples of people both with physical disabilities and with autism who we have worked with, not only through their work readiness, as you [Baroness Browning] have described, but through the interview process, preparing people for interview, practising interview techniques to help people with their own problems to get the job, but also, critically, supporting disabled people once they are in work. Specialist programmes that allow that type of support are much more successful. I can think of an example of a young man with autism who, after that process, secured a job in a hotel bar. After a while, he was missing the autism group that he went to on a Thursday, but he found that difficult to broach with his employer in his first job. We were able to do some of that work with him and with the employer. He is now able to attend his group and is happily still employed. It is those sorts of things, intervening in those ways at that time, which can prevent people from falling out of work. You are absolutely right about work readiness and preparation for interview, but it is about job retention as well.

The Chairman: Mr Dunster, in your evidence you said you thought it cost £550 extra a month for a disabled person for expenses; it is what they need to spend. Could that be reduced if the reasonable adjustment duty was fully complied with?

Mr Dunster: The extra costs that disabled people face are for three broad reasons. This may seem obvious but it is worth delving into to answer this question. The first is that disabled people need things that non-disabled people do not need—specialist equipment for example. Secondly, disabled people might need more of some things than non-disabled people. An example is energy bills for someone with a muscular condition. Finally, disabled

people pay too much for some things. The benefits system recognises that disabled people face extra costs. We have the disability living allowance—the DLA—and its replacement, PIP, which recognises that.

However, on the question of how these extra costs can be driven down with reasonable adjustments, they could make a difference on the latter of those categories: where disabled people are paying too much for certain goods and services. A specific example that I would like to draw to the Committee's attention is digital inclusion, digital accessibility, which you mentioned earlier. This year, Scope was pleased to support an independent commission called the Extra Costs Commission, and I am happy to provide the Committee with a copy of the final report. This looked exactly at this issue of how to drive down extra costs that disabled people face. One of the areas it looked at was digital inclusion. Twenty-seven per cent of disabled people have never used the internet. In a world where we are used to getting the best deals for things online and where increasingly the way we interact with goods and services and providers is online, it is very difficult for disabled people to access those types of things if they do not have that access. That is one type of reasonable adjustment where we think there could be more guidance to improve disabled people's access to the internet and their ability to be online in general. We think that could improve some things and certainly drive down costs in that latter category.

Q55 Lord McColl of Dulwich: Is reliance on individuals bringing cases to the courts and tribunals an effective way of achieving compliance with the Equality Act? Could it be made easier, and if so, how, please?

Mr Farmer: I am not sure it should be the sole way of ensuring compliance. Entitling people to bring cases to court is incredibly important, and it helps to clarify the case law as time goes on, and there is a great requirement for that. With the cuts and challenges to spend on legal aid, we will almost certainly see the number of cases diminishing quite considerably in this space. It is unlikely that the case law will shift significantly if we simply rely on that. We would argue it is important to make sure that individuals have that ability, but it is also important to find other ways to bring this into play. I suspect we might come on to this later in the context of the role of the regulator and where the Commission's role potentially starts and finishes. I think our starting point would be to encourage people to pursue complaints internally within their organisations. This legislation is now five years old and there should be less excuse, if you like, for people not complying. The more we see people talking more openly about the legislation and the application of it, the easier it will be to achieve compliance.

Mr Dunster: I would echo everything that Paul has said. There has to be a balance with individuals being able to bring cases—we have some body of case law now—and the enforcement of the public sector equality duty is an important counterbalance to that. I would perhaps add a third thing here, which is the role of other regulatory bodies in other spaces. Perhaps they have a bigger role to play in looking at the enforcement of some reasonable adjustments, for example. An example that I would like to highlight from the Extra Costs Commission would be for the Financial Conduct Authority—the FCA—to look at the insurance industry. We know that insurance can be incredibly difficult for disabled people to access and incredibly expensive. That might be a role for someone like the FCA to look at in more detail in order to understand what is going on in that market and how it could be improved for disabled people.

Lord McColl of Dulwich: Should organisations be able to take claims on behalf of individuals or groups, because they are not allowed to at the moment, are they?

Mr Farmer: I do not think they are allowed to. There are occasions when organisations will intervene in particular cases where they see a wider approach, and we at Mind have on occasion drawn to the attention of the courts a particular individual's experiences that have a potentially wider impact on a wider group of people. I think that approach of intervening is quite a powerful route. Obviously if an organisation were to take a particular case, they still need the resources to be able to do that, and I do not think there are many organisations, certainly inside the voluntary sector, that are in a position to do that. However, our ability to be able to intervene in cases of potentially wider significance, and indeed the Commission's ability to do the same, could well be an important way of helping to clarify areas of the law that might be otherwise unclear.

I would say that in substance, issues here are more about actual compliance where the employers are not complying. We have already seen far too many cases where employers are not complying, which is very unfortunate. Hopefully one of the benefits of this inquiry will be to give some amplification to the importance of the legislation as it currently sits.

Baroness Browning: What about judicial review where it is quite common for charities to collectively fund and challenge the Government—I know it is expensive—if they see that they are legislating in a way that is adverse to the equality rights of people with disabilities? Are you in any way put off as charities from having that collective role? Should the Equality and Human Rights Commission be encouraging you to do that?

Mr Farmer: I think all charitable organisations have a responsibility to use their resources sensibly, but equally voluntary organisations should have the ability, where appropriate, to explore a number of different options in their approach to changing the world on behalf of their beneficiaries, which is broadly speaking what we are here to do. In some cases we will pursue public means through the media, through the work that we do with you and your colleagues. However, it is important that voluntary organisations keep the capability to use the law and judicial review where that is appropriate. In fact, we and colleagues at the National Autistic Society and Rethink Mental Illness were involved in just such an intervention a couple of years ago.

Baroness Browning: I am aware of that.

Mr Farmer: However, it is important for organisations to be mindful of the potential cost to them. Although some protection is potentially available, it is something you have to enter into very cautiously. It is equally important to recognise that the ability to use judicial review should remain with organisations where that is appropriate.

The Chairman: Mr Dunster, do you think having an ombudsman for disabled people would be a good idea?

Mr Dunster: When the Disability Discrimination Act became part of the Equality Act, there were lots of changes that were broadly positive, and we can talk about those later. It may be true to say that something we lost in that transition was having a specific disability commissioner and disability commission, which has perhaps meant that some of that focus has changed a bit. Obviously we have the Office for Disability Issues and the Minister for Disabled People, and it is very important that is a cross-cutting government role. Although it sits in the Department for Work and Pensions it very much has to be across government, and the Minister and the ODI have an important role in looking at that across government. It is certainly interesting for the Committee to look at ways in which we can strengthen that oversight across government policy.

The Chairman: An ombudsman would actually sort out issues.

Mr Dunster: It is not something that Scope has a particular position on, but it is certainly something that we could follow up after this session, if that would be helpful. As I say, it would be advantageous to have a greater focus on specific disability issues across government policy. It is something, as Paul said, that organisations such as ours try to do as well. Our relationship with such a figure or body would be important.

Q56 Baroness Pitkeathley: I have just one interest to declare as vice-president of Carers UK. My question very much follows on from what you have just been talking about. I want to ask you each specifically about your relationship with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Perhaps you could start, Mr Dunster. Could you sum up your organisation's relationship with the Commission in one or two sentences, and expand on anything more you would like the EHRC to be doing, or anything different?

Mr Dunster: Certainly. The role of the EHRC is very important, and our relationship with it has been very strong on specific special projects that it has undertaken. I am thinking particularly of the project on hate crime, the work that it undertook on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the ratification of that, and in the establishment of the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund, which was about disabled people in public life. In those three areas we have had a very good working relationship with the EHRC. We recognise that limited resources and the wide remit of the EHRC make it very difficult for both us and it to engage more regularly than when on those specific projects. Hopefully, that addresses the general relationship that you were asking about.

In terms of what more it could specifically look at, I would come back to the idea of digital inclusion. I think the EHRC might be able to look specifically at how we can improve disabled people's access to digital technology and the internet in particular. We are mindful of the budget constraints of the EHRC, and we think it should be fully funded as well to enable it to do that properly. It was a recommendation that was set out in the Extra Costs Commission, which I have mentioned already, and we think that would be a good area for it to focus on in the future.

Mr Farmer: Like Mr Dunster, we have a good relationship with the commission. Similarly, we have supported and worked with it on individual inquiries and particularly the Preventing Deaths in Detention of Adults with Mental Health Conditions inquiry, which I thought was excellent; it looked at the very important issue of people who are under the care of the state and the support for their human rights and people who die in the care of the state, often people with mental health problems, of course. I would support the general view that those individual pieces of work are positive.

In terms of where we might want to go from here, it feels to me that there is a trend across regulators more generally to shift from being supportive and championing the issue and playing a regulatory role to really focusing their attention on the regulatory dimension. Those of us in the voluntary sector have seen a change in the approach that the Charity Commission has applied, for example, in its relationship with our sector, and I think we have seen the same with CQC and other regulators. At this point in the cycle of the legislation, there may be a strong argument for the EHRC to really focus on its regulatory powers and to play a stronger enforcement role. As we referred to earlier, the broad construction of the law is sound, yet it does not seem to have percolated sufficiently into the daily lives of people in the workplace, for example. So we would encourage the commission to play that more regulatory role.

Baroness Pitkeathley: If it focused more on that regulatory role, would you see the support and championing role being lodged elsewhere? If so, where?

Mr Farmer: Clearly the regulator has a role in championing, as all regulators do because they have to walk the balance in the eyes of the public between the role they play as the arbiter, if you like, on behalf of the public and the Government of determining whether a particular sector is performing well or not and making sure you do not diminish trust in that particular section. There is an argument for seeing a stronger voice supporting the positive promotion of the Equality Act as it sits. Mr Dunster has already referred to the Disability Confident campaign, which is run by the Department for Work and Pensions, which has the potential to say a lot more about the entitlements that people have under the legislation. It is those kinds of initiatives that, with a broad base of support—ideally employers, voluntary organisations and the Government working together to promote the benefits of this legislation—would probably be a more effective way to communicate these important messages.

The Chairman: I am unclear about what you mean about expanding the regulatory role, because what we have tended to hear from organisations and disabled people in the last few weeks has been they need someone to actually enforce the law. It still seems as though there is a gap there. I do not know whether it is properly the role of the EHRC, which sees itself as very strategic. Who is actually going to go out there and enforce the law? It is a terrific burden on one disabled person to have to take action or be expected to go to court. Surely there must be someone to do it for them.

Mr Farmer: I think there is potential for the commission to see that as its role to warn employers about potential breaches and the approaches that individual employers might be taking. I think you are right that the construction of this has left a gap and that there is an overreliance on the individual to take the cases. Your suggestion of an ombudsman well may be a positive way forward, but maybe that role should be part of a redefined function for the Commission.

Q57 Baroness Thomas of Winchester: I should declare a few interests. I receive DLA, I am a trustee of Muscular Dystrophy UK, I am on a committee about disabled access to Lord's Cricket Ground, and I am a patron of Thrive. Some submissions have proposed that local authorities build access requirements into licensing provisions, such as for taxis. Are there ways in which local authorities could use their planning and licensing powers to help people with mental health problems or other disabled people where the barrier is not primarily physical access?

Mr Dunster: Taxis and private hire vehicles are a very good example here. There is certainly a gap between the Equality Act and licensing law. We think that could be something which the Committee recommends is looked at. We know that disabled people are more likely to use taxis and private hire vehicles. We also know from our research that two-thirds of disabled people reported being overcharged for taxis, so that is certainly an area we can look at. Compliance with the Equality Act is not a condition of licensing currently, and that is something that could change. The Law Commission has done some work in this area and we would support its recommendations. If compliance with the Act was a condition of licence and that meant that disability equality training was available for all drivers, a clearer complaints process was displayed inside taxis so disabled people had more understanding how they could make complaints, and there was a duty to stop when hailed by someone who was visibly disabled, we think that would go some way to closing that gap.

It is also important to say the additional cost of taxis and private hire vehicles are not just issues for people with physical disabilities; people with mental health problems or learning disabilities or autism are much more likely to use taxis or private hire vehicles if they cannot use public transport for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is important to remember that the barriers are not just for people with physical disabilities, and the extra costs of disability that I talked about earlier are certainly there in this instance for disabled people with non-visible disabilities.

Mr Farmer: We would agree that local authorities, like other public sector bodies, have the opportunity to enshrine the principles of the Equality Act in a whole range of activities where they play a role. I agree with the point that has been made specifically about licensing, but also the extent to which a local authority is properly gathering the information for its joint strategic needs assessment in identifying the needs of their local community. We know that these are incredibly important documents for understanding what a local community might look like, yet often the data presented to local authorities does not give the granularity of information about the numbers of disabled people, the number of people with mental health problems, and so on. It is so important for local government in this context to make the best possible choices in determining the priorities for their local communities to understand the nature of the population they have. Applying the principles of the Equality Act into those kinds of processes could be very, very powerful indeed.

The other dimension where local authorities and others have a role to play—this was discussed earlier, but it is worth pulling out a little more—is in their role as commissioners of other providers. Placing requirements on providers of services not just to sit within the Equality Act, which is a basic requirement, but to actively show how they are recognising the requirements of the legislation, could be quite powerful in embedding these issues within the different powers of individual local authorities. That also plays across to the point about the regulators, because ideally we want all the regulators to look at their work through an equalities prism. We do not want just the EHRC to do that, we want each regulator to think about the extent to which equality legislation is being complied with in different areas.

Baroness Thomas of Winchester: Would it need legislation, or do you think it can be done more informally than that?

Mr Farmer: I am not an expert, but I do not think this would require particular legislation. It is a question of guidance and encouragement.

Baroness Brinton: Some licensing authorities insist on accessibility training and disability training, some do not. Should it be made compulsory?

Mr Dunster: Certainly in the case that I outlined on taxis, yes, absolutely.

Mr Farmer: Yes.

Baroness Brinton: Sorry, it was a bit rhetorical.

The Chairman: Do you find it problematic that some parts of the Equality Act have still not been brought into force, in particular the part on taxis?

Mr Dunster: That would be the obvious example I would use; it is a very clear one. There are some other examples of where additional guidance might be advantageous as well as duties not being brought forward. A good example of reasonable adjustments in work and for employers is flexible working. We know that disabled people greatly benefit from flexible working arrangements, yet we also know that disabled people struggle to access those types of arrangements, so some more guidance on what a reasonable adjustment would look like in flexible working would be helpful. Employers might not think of flexible working as a reasonable adjustment, and they might be more willing to look at it if they did. We have

done some work looking at the benefits of a part-time sick leave or flexible adjustment leave model that would enable people not to take chunks of time off on sick leave when they have a fluctuating condition that is particularly bad at one moment or where they have just acquired an impairment and are making adjustments in their own lives for that. Perhaps that transition point is something that we could look at and strengthen for disabled people but also for employers so they do not lose valued members of staff for long periods of time on sick leave.

Q58 The Chairman: We have heard a great deal from your organisations and others along the lines that the law is more or less satisfactory but its implementation and enforcement is not. Is that right? What one thing would you do about it? There may be more than one thing?

Mr Farmer: Broadly speaking, that is right. The legislation fulfilled the difficult task of bringing together a series of different strands of legislation, and came up with an enhanced set of proposals for many people with mental health problems. When the Act was passed, we felt this was a significant step forward for people with mental health problems. The experiences of our legal line, for example, remain that this is poorly understood. Employers are contacting us believing that people with mental health problems are not covered by the Act, for example. If there were a single thing that would make the biggest difference, it would be to reinforce and increase the awareness and understanding for both employers and employees. I think there is a role for all parties, the Government and employers' organisations, to reinforce those messages strongly.

Mr Dunster: I am afraid you are getting a lot of consensus from us. Yes, I would completely agree with your assessment and with what Mr Farmer has said. An important difference for us in the Equality Act was lowering the threshold for discrimination from "impossible" to "substantial" disadvantage, which is very important. Greater guidance, greater understanding and greater enforcement would certainly help disabled people and employers to understand their obligations under the Act. The Act did something else that was important, which was to broaden its focus away from just the workplace to disabled people as consumers and citizens as well. It is important to think about that, not just in the space of employment and work but outside out that.

The aims of the Act might be something to think about more broadly. We may have to look elsewhere in government policy for those things to be realised. I talked earlier about the cross-cutting role of the Office for Disability Issues and the Minister, but more might be done to look at where different agendas across government can fit together, so that more disabled people can find work and stay in work, or at how we make sure when we are building infrastructure projects that we are doing so in a way that is completely accessible for disabled people. That should be done across government. That may not be specifically about enforcement of the Equality Act, but it might be about taking that spirit and making sure that it is worked across government.

Q59 The Chairman: Would you say that disabled people get their fair share of attention and focus under the Equality Act compared with the situation before 2010?

Mr Dunster: It is very difficult for us to judge that. We are well aware of the constraints on the EHRC in particular. We at Scope certainly try to do as much as possible to bring attention to the issues that disabled people face—there are lots of other organisations that do that too—and we will continue to do that, speaking to you and your colleagues as well as to the public to make sure we highlight those issues.

Mr Farmer: The Disability Committee within the EHRC was a really important component in the governance of the EHRC to ensure that disability was not lost in this. There were concerns that that would happen. It remains a challenge to make sure that disability issues in the round are seen as an integral part of this legislation, especially when there are many other challenges on other dimensions of the Act.

The Chairman: Mr Farmer, would you say that people with mental health issues get an even worse deal, as it were, than those with physical disabilities?

Mr Farmer: The facts speak for themselves in the low numbers of people with mental health problems in employment and the large numbers of people who fall out of employment for a lack of appropriate support, despite the fact that that support is evidence-based and clear. People with mental health problems face very particular issues, and underpinning a lot of that is the ongoing stigma around mental health. Although we have made considerable progress in recent years in tackling public understanding, our evidence suggests that people with mental health problems still struggle to receive the kind of recognition of their entitlements under this legislation. This is not a criticism of other colleagues in the disability movement, who have worked extremely hard to make sure that disabled people are recognised, but for people with mental health problems—and to some extent this applies to people with learning disabilities and autism—there are particular challenges. We are trying to overcome a number of barriers to support people to work effectively, yet we know that people's contribution in work should be and is on an equal footing.

Baroness Thomas of Winchester: One more question following that up. I had something to do with asking the Government what they were doing to publicise the mental health support service that Remploy runs. It is a brilliant service but far too few people know about it. How could that be better publicised? How could it be better known by both employees and employers?

Mr Farmer: We and others do our best to make sure that those messages are clearly heard. This is part of the wider issue around the visibility of the Access to Work programme more generally. It still remains the Government's best kept secret. It remains extremely cost-effective to the state, yet it remains relatively unknown. Campaigns like the Department for Work and Pensions' Disability Confident campaign need to remind people of the range of support that is available and encourage more employers to use Access to Work. If we are looking at how you support the ambition, which we share, of halving the disability employment gap, which we all think is a very important ambition of this Government, one of the most powerful ways to do that would be to make sure that Access to Work and the support services around it, such as the Remploy programme, are properly publicised. I think you could make a huge difference quite quickly.

The Chairman: Any final questions from my colleagues around the table? No. May I thank you both very much, not only for coming here but for the valuable work that you do? We wish you every success in the future. Thank you very much.