

Written evidence from Marie-Claire Barker (DEG0039)

My name is Marie-Claire Barker. I am responding to your call for evidence through Scope, the disability equality charity. I want to share my experiences of the barriers I've faced in work and while looking for work and what can be improved to help disabled people in the future.

I've answered two questions below as part of your call for evidence.

What extra support would you benefit from in work? Or what would you change about existing support on offer?

Access to Work - it's too much about box ticking and not enough about common sense. Only accepting evidence from a GP when there are other professionals who know much more about how someone manages in a situation or the barriers they face.

It also focuses too much on equipment, some of the equipment is then wasted as it's not used to its full potential as training is scrimped on & not on going.

It would be really useful to have someone contact me a couple of times a year to check things are going ok & to liaise with my employer over little issues before they become big. Employers do often want to help but don't always know how.

Working from home due to the pandemic has impacted as instead of doing things face to face it's now all done using technology which isn't always accessible. Also while my employer would be happy for me to bring my Access to work equipment home I just don't have the space for it.

Looking to the future, what does the Government need to improve on to help disabled people get into, stay and progress in work?

Make the access to work process easier for both the employer and the disabled person. People just want to work and contribute. Sometimes the access to work process can make you feel like you're asking for something you're not entitled to. I just want to be able to work as an equal.

Help with assistive technology training while someone is looking for work rather than waiting until they start. The pressure of starting a new job is hard enough without having to wait for training for it to be accessible.

Many application forms and DWP forms aren't accessible to visually impaired people. We shouldn't have to rely on others for help with these.

The disability employment gap has been stuck close to 30 percent for over a decade, and the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic has seen disabled people falling out of work faster than non-disabled people.

Scope wants the Government to deliver on its pledge to tackle the disability employment gap. The Government must use the opportunity of the forthcoming National Strategy for Disabled People to set out plans to close the gap.

I hope that the evidence I have provided, alongside research from Scope will prove useful to the committee.

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