

Written evidence from Name Withheld (DEG0131)

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 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?

As an ex Access Officer for over 14 years I have witnessed the lack of knowledge regarding disabled people's needs at first hand. Disabled staff are most likely to have decisions made about them without discussion with themselves. That includes things like moving offices, job roles they can take on and any social outing. It is commonly thought that the best person to decide on options for a disabled person is their manager. We need to make it clear that the best person to start with decisions on altering the workplace is the disabled person affected by the changes. Budgetary issues always lead in any discussion. I have found that not including the disabled employee or candidate in the early discussion always results in bigger expenditure.

I do fear the impact that the pandemic has had on companies and organisations who will be looking at the bottom line and ruling out moving to more accessible premises, spending on improving access and indeed hiring someone with an impairment in case they have to spend more to enable that employee. There should be little or no threshold payments for employers wishing to involve access to work when considering employment of a disabled person.

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

Training for employers on and by disabled people ! There are plenty of good disabled trainers who can influence the workplace mindset. When I first was employed I was always being asked if I could drive myself in a car. Assumptions that I couldn't were the norm.

We need to keep the conversation open about abilities of disabled people not disabilities. Making sure disabled employees have the same opportunities to advance is one of the most difficult tasks ahead. Disabled staff are overlooked unless they are more aggressive than others in seeking to progress in a career. This means that capable employees are not given a chance. Its almost like "being grateful just to have a job" is the mindset of both disabled employee and senior staff. Training schemes designed with disabled staff in mind where confidence building as well as presentation and skills to advance must be available more readily.

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.

December 2020