



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2018-0038, 19 February 2018

The role of disabled people in economic growth

By Andrew Powell
Jennifer Brown
Doug Pyper

Summary

A Commons Chamber debate on a motion on the role of disabled people in economic growth is scheduled for Thursday 22 February. The Member leading the debate is Lisa Cameron MP.

The motion to be debated is:

That this House recognises the potential talent pool within the disabled community; notes that there will be an employment gap after the United Kingdom leave the European Union and that there is ample opportunity to include disabled workers in economic growth; this motion therefore calls on the Government to act immediately on its commitment to get one million more disabled people into employment by 2027; and further calls on the Government to increase awareness within the business community of the benefits of employing an inclusive workforce.

Contents

1. Background	2
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Benefits of employing an inclusive workforce	2
1.3 Reasons for the lower employment rate for disabled people	3
1.4 Equality Act 2010	4
1.5 Employment of disabled people	5
1.6 The Work, Health and Disability White Paper	7
1.7 The Disability Confident scheme	8
2. Government Material	10
3. Parliamentary Material	11
4. Policy Documents	13
Press Articles	15

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this debate is to discuss a motion on the role of disabled people in economic growth.

The motion to be debated is:

That this House recognises the potential talent pool within the disabled community; notes that there will be an employment gap after the United Kingdom leave the European Union and that there is ample opportunity to include disabled workers in economic growth; this motion therefore calls on the Government to act immediately on its commitment to get one million more disabled people into employment by 2027; and further calls on the Government to increase awareness within the business community of the benefits of employing an inclusive workforce.

Over 7 million people of working age (16-64) in the UK are disabled or have a health condition, and 3.5 million of these are in work. 350,000 are unemployed (meaning that they are not in work but are actively looking for work) while 3.3 million are economically inactive (meaning they are not in work and are not looking for work).

In April to June 2017, 17% of working age people in the UK were disabled, yet only 11% of people who were in employment were disabled. In contrast 24% of people who were unemployed, and 37% of people who were economically inactive, were disabled.

In the 2017 conservative party manifesto, there was a commitment to get 1 million more disabled people into work over the next ten years. To meet this target there would have to be 4.5 million people in employment with disabilities by 2027, a growth of 29% on current levels.

The Work and Health Disability White Paper sets out the policies the government has taken, and intends to take, to get these people into work.

1.2 Benefits of employing an inclusive workforce

Employing disabled people or those with long term health conditions can be beneficial to an organisation for a number of reasons.

The best person for a job may be someone who has a disability, and the value that this person will bring to an organisation may offset the costs involved in employing them. Encouraging applications from disabled people will also increase the number of high quality applicants available, and increase the likelihood of getting the right person for the job.

Additionally the benefits derived from making the necessary adjustments required to keep someone who develops a disability in an organisation may offset the costs involved in making these adjustments. These costs may also work out to be cheaper than the cost of replacing the employee: the Business Disability Forum has reported that the average cost of replacing an individual employee is an estimated £30,000.¹

The DWP report that the costs of making reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled employees are often low.²

Other benefits to the business include the following:

- It will create a diverse workforce, reflecting the diverse range of customers it serves and the community it is based.
- It can bring in additional skills, which could result in large savings.³
- Disabled people generally stay in the job for longer, and have lower rates of absenteeism.⁴

The government has reported that finding work for an additional 1% of eligible Employment and Support Allowance claimants in 2018/19 would save £240 million, and provide a boost to the economy of £260 million.⁵

1.3 Reasons for the lower employment rate for disabled people

While over half of employers have reported that they recognise the benefits that employing someone with a disability or health condition would bring to their organisation, but a 2013 study reported that less than 1 in 10 employers actually recruited someone with a disability or long-term health condition in the previous year. This raises the question of why some employers are less likely to employ disabled people.⁶

In their Disability Employment Gap report (January 2017), the Work and Pensions Committee reported the evidence that they had heard on why some employers are less likely to employ disabled workers than those who are not disabled. This included the following:

- Employers were unsure of their Equality Act 2010 duties (see section 1.4).
- Employers were unwilling to make adjustments for disabled employees.
- Employers may hold discriminatory or unhelpful attitudes about disabled people's capabilities.

¹ Business Disability Forum, [State of the Nation: Retaining and developing employees with disabilities \(Stage 1\)](#), June 2015

² DWP, [Employing disabled people and people with health conditions](#)

³ Ibid

⁴ DWP/Office for Disability Issues, [150 job or training placements for disabled people every working day](#), July 2014

⁵ DWP, [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#), 30 November 2017, p6

⁶ DWP, [Disability Confident Employer Campaign](#), September 2017

- Employers can struggle to understand how disabled people could fit into their existing workforce.
- Anxiety amongst employers around etiquette and how to approach a disabled person.

Separately, Mencap reviewed some of the perceived extra costs that can stop organisations from employing people with learning disabilities. They reported that some of the concerns of these organisations include:

- Concerns about the extra supervision and training costs that the employee may need.
- Concerns about the cost of making reasonable adjustments to accommodate someone with a disability.
- Concerns that workers with a learning disability would represent a greater health and safety risk than other workers.⁷

1.4 Equality Act 2010

The *Equality Act 2010* prohibits both direct and indirect disability discrimination in employment and recruitment.

Direct disability discrimination occurs where an employer treats a disabled person less favourably because they are disabled.

Indirect disability discrimination occurs where an employer applies a policy, criterion or practice which has the effect of putting a disabled person at a particular disadvantage as compared with non-disabled persons. Indirect discrimination may be lawful if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The Act also prohibits employers from harassing or victimising disabled people.

Aside from these protections – which apply to all other protected characteristics (e.g. race and sex) – the Act contains certain provisions that apply only to disabled persons, as set out below.

Discrimination arising from disability

[Section 15](#) prohibits treating a disabled worker unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of his disability (rather than his disability *per se*). For example, dismissing a worker with multiple sclerosis for taking extended disability-related sick leave.

An employer does not contravene this prohibition if it can show that it did not know, and could not reasonably have been expected to know, that the employee had the disability. Nor does it contravene the provision if it can show that the treatment was a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Reasonable adjustments

Broadly, an employer is under a statutory duty to take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to:

⁷ Mencap, [A systematic review of the literature on the benefits for employers of employing people with learning disabilities](#), 2017, pp 25-29

- avoid putting disabled persons at a substantial disadvantage where a provision, criterion or practice would put them at that disadvantage compared with non-disabled persons;
- remove, alter or provide means of avoiding physical features (e.g. stairs) where that feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled persons; or
- provide an auxiliary aid where a disabled person would, but for the provision of that aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.⁸

A “substantial” disadvantage is one that is “more than minor or trivial”.⁹

1.5 Employment of disabled people

Statistics showing the economic activity of disabled people are published by the Office for National Statistics, although the publication of these statistics has been suspended to allow for further quality assurance of these statistics. This means that the latest available data are for April to June 2017.¹⁰

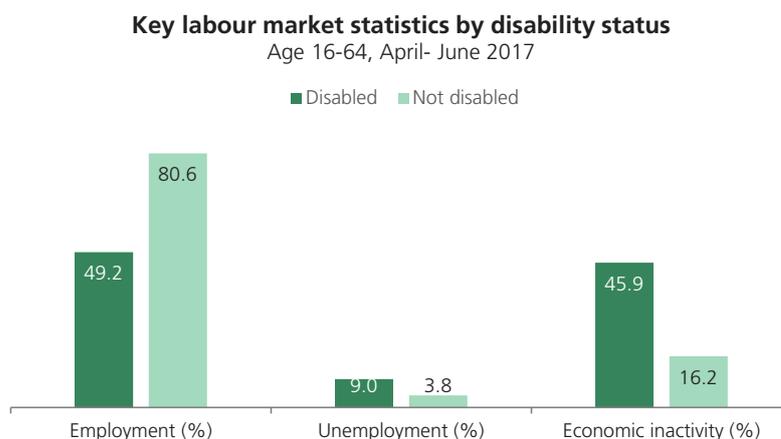
Headline Figures

There were 3.5 million people of working age (16-64) with disabilities in employment in April-June 2017, an employment rate of 49.2%. The employment rate for people without disabilities was 80.6%.

The employment rate for people with disabilities was 1.3 percentage points higher in April-June 2017 than in the same period in 2016, and the number of people in employment who had a disability increased by 104,000.

346,000 people with disabilities of working age were unemployed. People with disabilities have an unemployment rate of 9.0%. The unemployment rate for people without disabilities was 3.8%.

The key statistics available on disabled people in employment in the UK is summarised in the Library Briefing Paper [People with disabilities in employment](#)



Source: ONS, Labour Market Bulletin, Table A08

⁸ *Equality Act 2010*, sections 20-21 & Schedule 8

⁹ *Equality Act 2010*, [section 212](#)

¹⁰ The statistics within this section have been taken from [Table A08](#) of the ONS Labour Market Statistics

3.3 million people with disabilities of working age were economically inactive. The economic inactivity rate for those with disabilities is 45.9%. This compares to a rate of 16.2% for those without disabilities.

The number of older people who are in work is increasing. In 2010 one in four of the working age population was aged 50 or over, and this is projected to increase to one in three by 2022. These workers are more likely to have at least one health condition that limits their day to day activities.^{11 12}

Employment Gap

What is commonly referred to as the 'disability employment gap' is the difference in the employment rate of people with disabilities and people without disabilities.

People with disabilities had an employment rate 31.4 percentage points lower than people without disabilities in April to June 2017.

Over the last two years the disability employment gap has reduced by 1.9 percentage points. This has been because the employment rate for people with disabilities has been rising faster than the employment rate for people without disabilities.

Disability employment gap

	Employment Rate (%)		Disability Employment Gap
	People with disabilities	People without disabilities	
2015 Q2	45.9	79.2	33.3
2015 Q3	45.6	80.2	34.5
2015 Q4	46.7	80.3	33.6
2016 Q1	46.9	79.9	33.1
2016 Q2	47.9	80.1	32.2
2016 Q3	48.3	80.5	32.2
2016 Q4	49.5	80.3	30.8
2017 Q1	49.0	80.2	31.2
2017 Q2	49.2	80.6	31.4

Source: ONS, Labour Market Bulletin, Table A08

Regional employment data

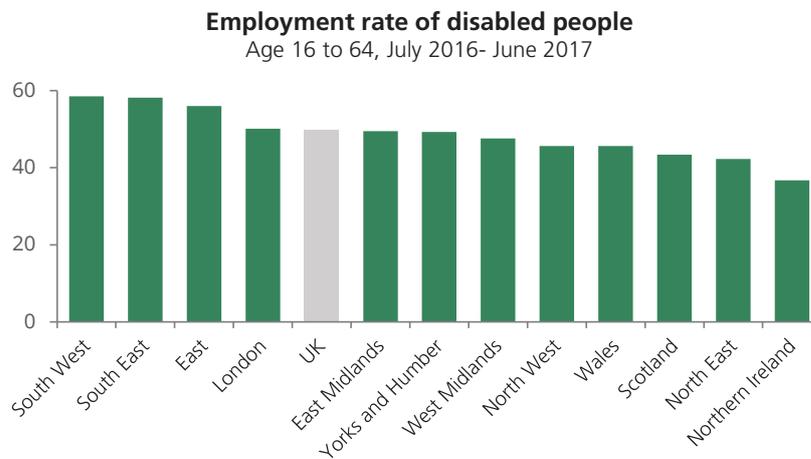
Data from the Annual Population Survey shows employment figures for disabled people by region. These statistics use an '[Equality Act core disabled](#)' definition to categorise people as having a disability rather than the Government Statistical Service harmonised definition of disability that is used for national figures. **These figures are therefore not directly comparable to the statistics above.**

Between July 2016 and June 2017 the employment rate was highest for people who were disabled in the South West at 58.5%, and lowest in

¹¹ Women and Equalities Committee, [Older people and employment: Is Government policy effective?](#), 28 March 2017

¹² Work and Pensions Committee, [Disability employment gap](#), 23 January 2017, p7

Northern Ireland at 36.7%. The distribution is largely reflective of the regions where overall employment rates are generally high or low.¹³



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, accessed via nomis

Notes: Definition of 'disabled' is different to that used elsewhere in this note. Here it refers to those who are 'Equality Act core disabled'

1.6 The Work, Health and Disability White Paper

The Conservative Party 2017 manifesto pledged to get “1 million more people with disabilities into employment over the next ten years”.¹⁴

To meet this target there would have to be 4.5 million people in employment with disabilities by 2027, a growth of 29% on current levels.

In November 2017, the Government set out its strategy on how it intends to get a million more disabled people into employment in the [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#) White Paper. The strategy is partly based on supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to find work, but also to provide investment to support these people to stay in work.

Existing employment schemes and initiatives that will continue to operate include:

- [Disability Confident](#) aims to help organisations “improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers”. In the White Paper, the Government reports that it intends to increase the reach and effectiveness of this scheme. Section 1.7 contains further information on this scheme.
- [Access to Work](#) provides support to meet the needs of disabled people in the workplace. An Access for Work grant can pay for special equipment, adaptations or support workers services, or the help needed to get to work. In the White Paper, the Government

A full description of the policies and proposals that are included in the White Paper are included in the Library Briefing Paper [People with disabilities in employment](#).

Further information on Access to Work is available in the Library Briefing Paper [‘Access to Work’ scheme for people with disabilities](#).

¹³ See Library briefing paper [Labour market statistics: UK regions and countries](#) for details on employment rate by region for the whole population.

¹⁴ Conservative Party, [Forward Together: Our plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future](#), p57

states this scheme “will be significantly enhanced over the next year”.

- [New Enterprise Allowance](#) helps disabled people start or develop their own business. In the White Paper the government reports that it is going to carry out research into the barriers that disabled people may experience in self-employment.
- [Fit for Work](#) offers free, expert and impartial advice to anyone looking for help with issues around health and work. The White Paper reports that this scheme has had very low take-up, and that the current model of Occupational Health provision does not meet the needs of employers or individuals. The Government intends to appoint an Expert Working Group on occupational health to explore the “fundamental issues” in this area, and produce a strategy for future reform by 2019/2020.

Further information on the New Enterprise Allowance scheme is available in the Library Briefing Paper [New Enterprise Allowance](#).

In addition, the White Paper included the following policies and proposals:

- The rollout of the **Personal Support Package**. This includes the recruitment of 200 Community Partners, 300 Disability Employment Advisers and around 100 Small Employer Advisers. New mandatory training will be introduced for work coaches. There will also be an extra 1,000 Mental Health Support Service places.
- Implementation of the **Work and Health Programme** started at the end of November 2017. The Programme provides support to help people find and keep a job. It is available, on a voluntary basis, to those with health conditions or disabilities, and to various groups of vulnerable people.
- The Government will explore the best options to provide support to those with **more complex needs**, and those who are furthest from the labour market.
- Proposals specifically targeted at **young people** with disabilities include a voluntary supported work experience programme, an increase in the number of supported internships and a cross-government approach to improve mental health support.
- The Government will explore how it can make **apprenticeships** more accessible to people with a disability, and also research the barriers that disabled people may experience when trying to become **self-employed**.

Further information on the Work and Health Programme is available in the Library Briefing Paper [Work and Health Programme](#).

1.7 The Disability Confident scheme

The [Disability Confident](#) scheme was introduced in July 2013 under the Coalition Government. As of 16 November there were 5,359 employers signed up to the scheme.

The aim of the scheme is to “support employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to their workplace.”

The aims of the scheme, as detailed within the DWP [Disability Confident aims and objectives](#) policy paper were as follows:

- engage and encourage employers to become more confident so they employ and retain disabled people

Further information on the Disability Confident scheme is available in the Library Debate Pack [Disability Confident Scheme](#).

- increase understanding of disability and the benefits of employing or retaining disabled people
- increase the number of employers taking action to be Disability Confident
- make a substantial contribution towards halving the disability employment gap

Levels of disability confident

There are three levels of the Disability Confident Scheme:

- **Disability Confident Committed** - an employer needs to agree to the Disability Confident commitments (see box to the right), which they should be carrying out within 12 months of becoming Disability Confident. They also need to commit to offer a disabled person an opportunity within their organisation, and again this should be in place within 12 months of them becoming Disability Confident.¹⁵
- **Disability Confident Employer** - the employer needs to show they are actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people, that they support disabled staff within their organisation and that they are making reasonable adjustments as required. They also need to commit to various actions to both encourage disabled people to join their organisation, and to develop the disabled people within their organisation.¹⁶
- **Disability Confident Leader** – the employer will be independently validated in whether they are meeting the criteria for a Disability Confident Leader, and show that they are encouraging and supporting other employers to become Disability Confident.¹⁷

Disability Confident commitments:

1. Inclusive and accessible recruitment
2. Communicating vacancies
3. Offering an interview to disabled people
4. Providing reasonable adjustments
5. Supporting existing employees who develop a disability to stay in work

Of the 5,359 employers signed up the scheme in November 2017,¹⁸

- 2,400 were Disability Confident Committed
- 2,871 were Disability Confident Employers
- 88 were Disability Confident Leaders

All main government departments are Disability Confident Leaders

The Department for Work and Pensions has provided [case studies](#) of those organisations who have demonstrated good practice in employing disabled people.

¹⁵ DWP, [Level 1: Disability Confident Committed guidance](#), July 2017

¹⁶ DWP, [Level 2: Disability Confident Employer guidance](#), July 2017

¹⁷ DWP, [Level 3: Disability Confident Leader guidance](#), July 2017

¹⁸ DWP, [Disability Confident: employers that have signed up](#), 16 November 2017

2. Government Material

2.1 Government policy documents on disabled people and work

[Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#)

30 November | Department of Work & Pensions and the Department of Health

This paper sets out plans to transform employment prospects for disabled people and those with long term health conditions over the next 10 years.

[Work, health and disability: improving lives consultation](#)

30 November | Department of Work & Pensions and the Department of Health

This consultation was concluded on 17th February 2017. The Improving lives white paper (above) is the government response to this consultation.

Responses to the Improving lives White Paper

The Labour Party, [If Government really cared about disabled people they would end austerity now](#), 30 November 2017

Scope, [What does the Government's plan to tackle disability employment mean for disabled people?](#), 30 November 2017

Mind, [Mind responds to Government plans for work, health and disability](#), 30, November 2017

Mencap, [Mencap response to DWP roadmap to get 1 million more disabled people into work- mild and moderate learning disabilities overlooked](#), 30 November 2017

Disability Rights UK, [Our view on Govt plans to see more disabled people in work](#), 30 November 2017

TUC, [Improving lives or a damp squib?](#) 30 November 2017

CBI, [The opportunity to get into and get on in work should be accessible for everyone](#), 30 November 2017

Citizens Advice, [Citizens Advice responds to government plans to close the disability employment gap](#), 30 November 2017

2.2 Disability Confident scheme documents

[Disability Confident: how to sign up to the employer scheme](#)

Government guidance for employers seeking to become Disability Confident.

[Disability Confident: employers that have signed up](#)

This document lists the employers that have signed up to the Disability Confident scheme, and their status (committed, employer or leader).

[Disability Confident case studies](#)

Government promotional material showing examples of how employers are being Disability Confident

3. Parliamentary Material

3.1 Papers

Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap

During the 2016-17 session of Parliament the Work and Pensions Select Committee conducted an inquiry on the Disability employment gap.

Work and Pensions Select Committee, [Disability employment gap. Seventh Report of Session 2016-17](#), 23 January 2017

Department of Work and Pensions, [Disability employment gap: Government response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016-17](#), 30 November 2017

Open Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiries concerning disabled people

[PIP and ESA Assessments inquiry](#)

An inquiry into the effectiveness of assessment processes used to determine eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

[Access to work cap on support grants inquiry](#)

The Parliamentary and Health Service and Ombudsman recently published a report on complaints about Access to Work. In its conclusion, the report raised concern about the impact of the cap set on Access to Work support.

This means funding for support workers is provided on the basis of an annual salary only, and is limited to 1.5x of national earnings. The Committee is examining the effects of the cap on the employment of disabled people.

Deposited Papers

[Deposited Paper DEP2016-0776](#)

Letter dated 26/10/2016 from Lord Freud to Lord Morris of Handsworth and others regarding the provision of assistance to disabled people to take advantage of flexible working in order to become self-sufficient and independent. 2p.26 Oct 2016 | Deposited papers | House of Lords

[Deposited Paper DEP2017-0165](#)

Letter dated 20/02/2017 from Lord Henley to Baroness Scott of Needham Market and others regarding points raised during the debate on the impact of Brexit on disabled people on 2 Feb 2017.

3.2 Questions

During Oral Questions to the Department of Work and Pensions on the 18th December 2017 there was a [series of questions](#) to the department regarding the Disability Confident scheme.

Questions taken during this oral session ranged from seeking an outline of the progress of the scheme's implementation, to questions regarding the Chancellor of the Exchequer's comments to the Treasury Committee concerning disabled people in employment.

Written Questions

Recent written questions to the Department of Work and Pensions regarding the Disability Confident scheme have asked how many

employers, Government Departments and Local Authorities have signed up to the scheme:

- In answer to written question [106605](#) Sarah Newton (Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work) stated that as of September 2017 there were 5,162 employers signed up to the Disability Confident scheme.
- Sarah Newton's response to question [119916](#) stated that all Government Departments are subscribed to the scheme at that the DWP is working closely with departments to ensure that all agencies and arms-length bodies are also signed up.
- In answer to question [3821](#) then Minister in the Department of Work and Pensions Penny Mordaunt stated that 268 Local Authorities had signed up to the Disability Confident scheme (as of July 2017).

Written question [11942](#) asked the Government whether the Department of Work and Pensions had put in place a formal complaints system for Disability Confident employers who do not confirm to guidance set out by the department. In response, Sarah Newton provided the Disability Confident scheme policy team email to be used to lodge complaints that cannot be resolved directly with employers.

3.3 Debates

[Leaving the EU: Disabled People's Services](#)

11 Jul 2017 | Debates | House of Commons | 627 cc71-84WH

Lead member: Cameron, Lisa | **Answering member:** Mordaunt, Penny · Pennycook, Matthew

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

[Long-term Health Problems and Work Outcomes](#)

Motion that this House has considered the role of employers in improving work outcomes for people with long-term health problems. Agreed to on question.

18 Apr 2017 | Debates | House of Commons | 624 cc333-352WH

Lead member: Tracey, Craig | **Answering member:** Mordaunt, Penny

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

4. Policy Documents

4.1 Think Tanks and academia

Resolution Foundation, [Retention deficit: a new approach to boosting employment for people with health problems and disabilities](#), 7 June 2016

The main contention of this report is that while there are things to be celebrated and continued, the policy focus around employment for people with health problems and disabilities has been too narrow, in three respects.

- First, it is too benefits-focused, both in terms of the motivation and the preferred method of delivery. Many workless disabled people are not in receipt of benefits, and benefit off-flows do not always equate to sustained employment.
- Secondly the policy agenda is insufficiently focused on supporting people in work. Stemming from the getting-people-off-benefits rhetoric, the tendency has been to focus on supporting people with health problems or a disability to enter employment. There has been less recognition that supporting people to remain in work can play at least as much of a role in overall outcomes.
- Building on this employment retention focus, the final criticism of the current policy agenda is that it is too late to engage. A typical trajectory from employment, to sickness absence to worklessness and benefit receipt involves six months in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay, followed by at least three months waiting to be assessed for Employment and Support Allowance and then directed towards back-to-work services. This is a problem because, as is well known, time away from work is a key determinant of the chances of re-entering employment.

The Centre for Social Justice, [Rethinking disability at work: recommendations, polling data and key statistics](#), March 2017

This report seeks to explore the underlying issues behind the employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people and suggests a number of ways to narrow the gap.

One of the key findings of the report is that the disability employment gap is partly driven by the large number of disabled people who fall out of employment.

IPPR, [Working well: A plan to reduce long term sickness absence](#), February 2017

This report makes the case for a new 'Fit Pay' policy that would give employers the incentive to work with staff to keep them healthy and in work.

University of Birmingham, [Britain's disabled workers continue to miss out on jobs due to a lack of tax breaks and incentives for employers](#), July 2017

4.2 Scope reports

Scope, [Working for all? Experiences of employment support amongst disabled people with high support needs](#), March 2017

This research looks at experiences of employment support amongst disabled people with high support needs. It explores how employment support services and employer attitudes impact on securing and retaining employment as well as progressing in a career.

Scope, [A million futures](#), April 2014

This report is the third in a series that looks in depth at the challenges with disabled people's living standards. It argues that with the right interventions, a million more disabled people could be in work, and sets out steps towards making this vision a reality.

Press Articles

The Independent, [Nothing will change until bosses reveal how many disabled people they employ](#) , September 29 2017, James Moore

The Guardian, ['I don't think employers see what disabled people can do'](#), October 3 2017, Rebecca Ratcliffe

The Guardian, [Why is the government waging a war against disabled people?](#) November 23 2017, Peter Beresford

The Independent, [Theresa May reveals plan to get one million more disabled people into work; A person's work life 'should not be dictated by their disability', says the Prime Minister](#) November 30, 2017, Jon Vale and Georgina Stubbs

The Telegraph, [Work can liberate the disabled. But my daughter has shown me the fight for dignity is not over](#), By Ian Birrell

The Independent, [The Government's new plan to help disabled people is a PR stunt and nothing more](#), December 1 2017 Friday, James Moore

The Daily Telegraph, [Our neglect of the disabled is a shameful waste of talent and resources](#), Ian Birrell

The Guardian, [Disabled people should be seen as individuals, not as a drain on the taxpayer](#), December 12 2017, Frances Ryan

The Independent, [Some bosses won't even lie to pollsters about not wanting to hire disabled people](#), December 15 2017, James Moore

The Guardian, [Disabled entrepreneurs are facing 'too many barriers'](#) November 2015, Louise Tickle

The Telegraph, [A disability need not be a barrier to business success](#), September 2017, Hajra Rahim

The Guardian, [Why disability shouldn't stop you being an entrepreneur](#) December 2010, Graham Snowdon

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