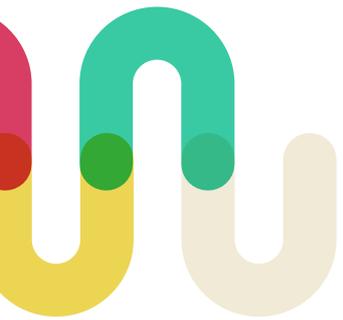




Disability Employment

END THE GAP



"My current employer withdrew an initial job contract and offer because they didn't think they could support me. The employability support from the charity changed that after a lot of discussion".

"In my previous employment my employer would allow me to take an extra five mins break to help me calm down and to gather my thoughts which I believed [helped] me whilst working".

"I have received great support from my employer. I have been received assistance to secure Access to Work (travel to and from the office). Other assistance provided includes a large reader machine (magnifier), PC screen magnification software as well as assistance when travelling for work".

"I feel in this small town that any opportunities are for people more able than me".

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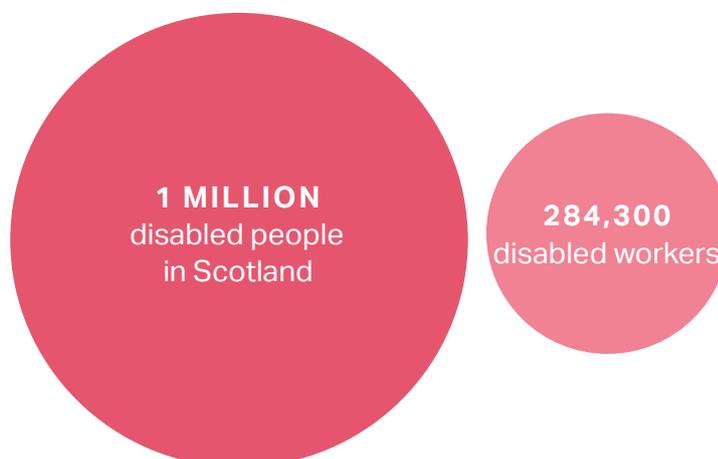
Introduction

There are one million disabled people in Scotland.¹ Statistics and research has shown that disabled people experience lower rates of employment and lower pay than non-disabled people.² Some disabled people are not able to work but for other people, working, where possible, can have economic and social benefits for individuals, the people around them and beyond.³ And many disabled people wish to work. Yet there are many barriers to entering the labour market – not just physical, developmental or related to their mental health, but also in terms of societal and employer attitudes.

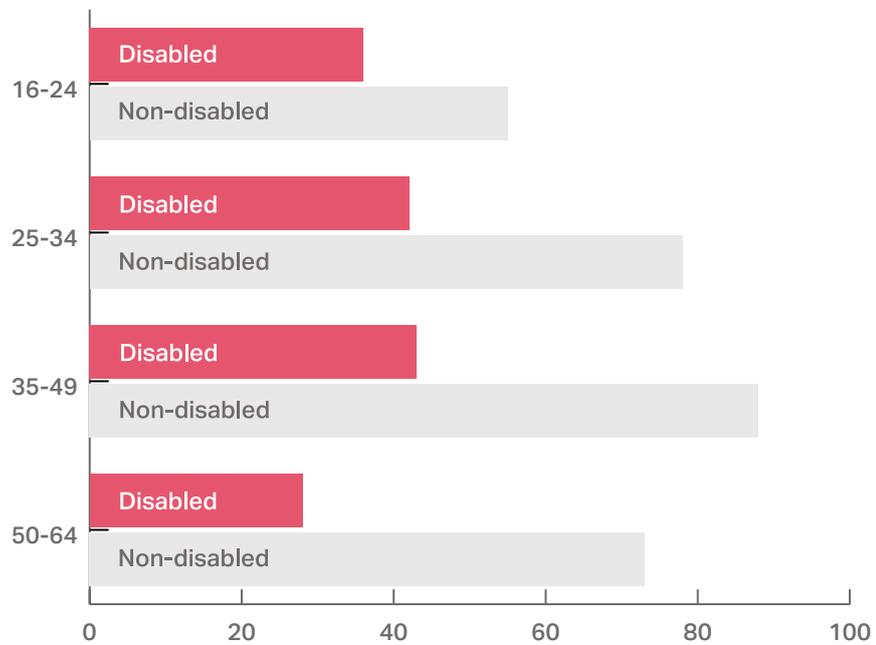
The aim of undertaking this report was to assess the policy context and research relevant to reducing the disability employment gap in Scotland, and combine with views from disabled people, employers and DAS members on how best to address the issue. The intention was to provide an overview to help to identify and inform next steps and support further activity by DAS and others.

While further research and work is needed in some areas, including tracking the implementation of existing commitments, it is apparent that there are some clear recommendations to ensure real progress is made towards reducing the disability employment gap. DAS looks forward to ongoing discussion with the UK and Scottish Governments and other organisations of the findings, and work towards the calls in this report.

It is estimated there are 284,300 disabled workers (aged 16 or over) in Scotland. Of these, 201,900 are employed in the private sector (11% of all private sector employees) and 78,700 are employed in the public sector (11.7% of all public sector employees).⁴



Employment rate (%)



SOURCE: ANNUAL POPULATION SURVEY (APS), JULY 15 – JUNE 16. ONS

However, despite the employment rate improving and the advent of the Equality Act, there is still a significant difference in the number of disabled people in employment (42%) compared to the overall figure (73.4%).⁵ Employment rates have actually fallen in recent years among some disabled groups, such as those living with sight loss, who now have an employment rate of 29%.⁶ As many as 48% of people think that fear of losing their job would make someone in their work with a mental health problem unlikely to disclose it.⁷

Five of the six members of DAS provide employment support to disabled people. All six members believe employment is a critical issue. DAS undertook some focus group research in 2016 with a range of people supported by the member charities for an earlier DAS research report.⁸ Work was seen to be important as a source of income, something to do and as a way for people to feel they were contributing to society.

It is key that sufficient support is provided to disabled people to enter, progress, and remain, in the workforce. This is particularly true given the greater focus on work and sanctions, due to UK welfare reform. There are potential opportunities posed by the devolution of aspects of social security and employment support, to do things differently in Scotland, especially in terms of linking the new social security system with employment support. It is positive that the UK Government has called for measures to reduce the disability employment gap; and the Scottish Government has gone further to say that they wish to ‘at least halve’ the disability employment gap. However, clear and significant action is required to realise these ambitions.

48% think someone in their workplace with a mental health problem unlikely to disclose for fear of losing their job

Summary of recommendations

A longer and more detailed overview of recommendations is included in the final section of this report but in summary, DAS is calling for:

- 1 We very much welcome commitments to reduce the disability employment gap, but ambitious, yet realistic, targets with specific deadlines for reducing the gap should be set and regularly and transparently reported on.
- 2 Public sector bodies should show leadership, through their recruitment practices and also, for example, through their procurement policies, such as their use of reserved employment contracts, by employing disabled people as well as working with the voluntary sector to engage other disability-friendly employers.
- 3 A real push is needed, with additional funding, for employment support that reflects realistic implementation, personalised support and the investment and positive impact this would have.





4 No compulsion forcing disabled people to work when evidence shows they are unable to do so.

5 Particularly in the context of enhanced devolution, the UK and Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners should work closely together to ensure joined up, evidence-based and cost-effective personalised employment support for disabled people.

6 Disabled people, and organisations experienced in providing person-centred support, should be involved in the design of employability services.

7 There needs to be person-centred and, where needed, intensive support for individuals, based on individual need.

8 If progress is to be made, work must be done to engage and support employers to recruit and support disabled people and to combat stigma. The current complex employability landscape can be particularly challenging to navigate. More could be done to ensure joined up services and a clearer picture for disabled people and employers, such as a single 'one-stop shop' portal.

9 Access to Work is a crucial service to aligning the needs of businesses with employment programme outcomes but more needs to be done to make employees and employers aware of its existence and the benefits it offers.

10 Additional measures to support preparatory work in education and skills, alongside implementing measures from the 'Developing the Young Workforce' plan.

Analysis of DAS surveys

As part of this research, DAS ran a survey to get more insight into disabled people's and employers' perspectives on the issues related to employment for disabled people. The surveys were open from Monday 25th September to Tuesday 1st November and were shared through a variety of networks. In that time, we had 73 responses – 53 from employees and 20 from employers/managers.

We also had conversations with a number of other organisations including disabled people's organisations (DPOs), the Chambers of Commerce in Glasgow, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Scotland and the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC).

Disabled people

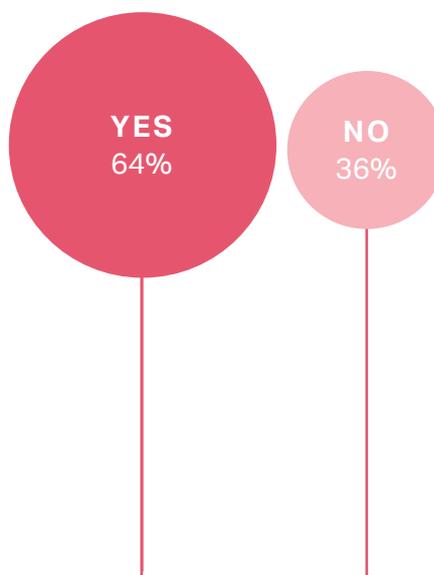
Of the people who responded to the survey for disabled people, all but one self-identified as disabled. This included a range of gender (33 women, 18 men, 1 non binary and 1 would rather not say), disabilities, and ages:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Mental Health Problem	13.46% 7
Physical	26.92% 14
Visually impaired/blind	11.54% 6
Deaf or hearing loss	5.77% 3
Learning disability	21.15% 11
Communication difficulties	3.85% 2
Other	0.00% 0
Would rather not say	1.92% 1
If other, or more than one condition, please comment here	15.38% 8
TOTAL	52

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
16-24	18.87% 10
25-34	22.64% 12
35-44	22.64% 12
45-54	26.42% 14
55-64	9.43% 5
65+	0.00% 0
Would rather not say	0.00% 0
TOTAL	53

The respondents' working experience ranged across part time personal assistants (PAs), director of a social enterprise, a nurse, people in education or voluntary work, and a mixture of roles. Most worked in the third sector (44.9%) with 26.53% in the public sector, 16.33% private sector and 12.24% as other - applying for roles and/or in education or doing voluntary work.

In response to the question, 'Have you ever felt at risk of losing your job because you don't have the right support?', 64% answered "Yes"; 36% said "No".



HAVE YOU EVER FELT AT RISK OF LOSING YOUR JOB BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT SUPPORT?



32.7%

very positive



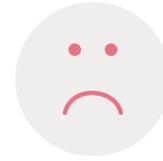
22.5%

positive



22.5%

neutral



22.4%

negative or very negative

The experiences of people varied greatly, from positive to negative. While nearly half found that their employers had an accessible and inclusive recruitment process, almost a quarter said they had found their employer’s recruitment practices to be negative towards disabled people. The responses for people’s experiences of working culture was split across the board, from very positive (32.7%, positive (22.5%), neutral (22.5%) and 22.4% said it was negative or very negative. Two-fifths said their employer did not have a good understanding of Access to Work.

	Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very negative	Total
Is their recruitment process accessible and inclusive of disabled people?	44.90% 22	18.37% 9	12.24% 6	20.41% 10	4.08% 2	49
Are they willing to make reasonable adjustments?	40.86% 21	18.37% 9	20.41% 10	12.24% 6	6.12% 3	49
How do you find the support you get from your manager?	38.78% 19	26.53% 13	18.37% 9	8.16% 4	8.16% 4	49
How do you find the working culture eg the way people behave?	32.65% 16	22.45% 11	22.45% 11	18.37% 5	4.08% 2	49
How do you find their awareness and understanding of Access to Work?	18.33% 8	20.41% 10	22.45% 11	30.61% 15	10.20% 5	49
Are they signed up to, and actively supportive, of the Disability Confident employer scheme?	18.75% 9	16.67% 8	41.67% 20	16.67% 8	6.25% 3	48
How would you rate awareness among employers of disability and related challenges?	20.41% 10	14.29% 7	34.69% 17	12.24% 6	18.37% 9	49

Employment rates



42% of people with a disability are in employment, compared with



73% of Scotland as a whole.

Ref: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regionallabourmarket/apr2017>

Access to Work

£9,639 was spent to promote Access to Work in 2016/17 out of a total £112m spent on the programme that year.



The Sayce Report suggested that there is a net return of £1.48 for every £1.00 spent on the programme.

Refs: www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-10-10/106839/
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49779/sayce-report.pdf

Employees

Comments made included:

"In [my] previous working environment, I was called a 'spastic', not through malice but genuine lack of understanding re terminology, e.g. disabled/handicapped etc. Also found large employer tried to apply positive discrimination to fulfil quotas, but only employed people with very minor disabilities (not too apparent) so when for example my condition worsened they actually created a trumped up charge to remove me from my position. Been told in a meeting that they didn't appreciate I was so disabled, or they would never have wanted me for the job as it was too visible".

"In my previous employment my employer would allow me to take an extra five mins break to help me calm down and to gather my thoughts which I believed [helped] me whilst working".

"My employer has shown very little awareness of what reasonable adjustments have been needed by me, and they have not all been put in place, despite them being requested, and reminders sent to the necessary departments".

"They were good enough to actually give me a job and chance to prove myself".

"A lack of awareness of issues and an unwillingness to have a positive approach from the start means we are in the negative side of disability from the outset. Hate crime is on the increase and the road to meaningful sustained employment in my view will only get increasingly difficult. We'd need to raise awareness of hate crimes disabilities from school age breaking down barriers and providing work choice supported opportunities alongside access to the apprenticeship schemes. Start asking the expert in the room, don't make decisions for us".

"I have received great support from my employer. I have received assistance to secure Access to Work (travel to and from the office). Other assistance provided includes a large reader machine (magnifier), PC screen magnification software as well as assistance when travelling for work".

"My current employer withdrew an initial job contract and offer because they didn't think they could support me. The employability support from the charity changed that after a lot of discussion".

"I feel in this small town that any opportunities are for people more able than me".

"I work with people who also have a long-term condition so they are very understanding and supportive. I don't believe I would find this outside of a social enterprise environment."

"Feels like work just wants rid of me".

Employers

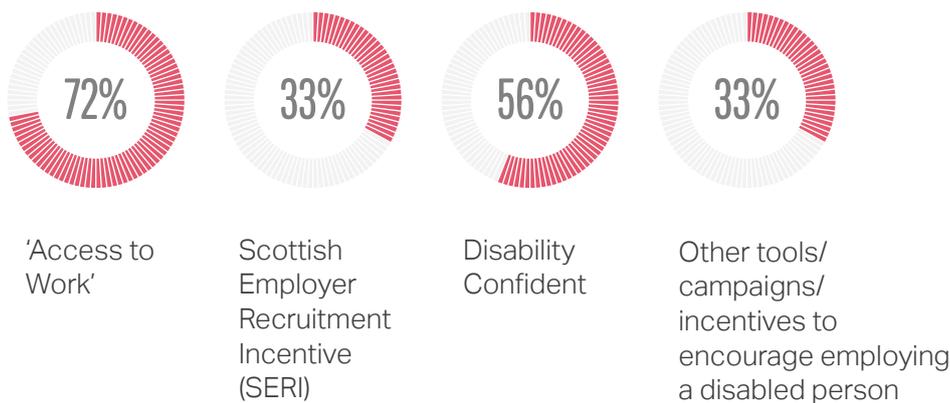
The respondents to the employers' survey were similarly mixed (55% senior management, 25% mid-management, 10% operational and 10% 'other'. The third sector at 53% was the largest group with 21% from the public sector, 16% the private sector and 11% other.

Possibly at least partly due to the self-selecting of respondents to the survey, 72% of the respondents had a disabled employee; and 90% knew a disabled person other than a colleague. 90% would consider employing a disabled person and one respondent said they "didn't know".

In response to the question, "Do you think any of the following are barriers to employing a disabled person? (tick as many as you think apply)", the most popular responses were perceived difficult to adapt roles to meet the needs of a disabled person (57.9%) and the cost of adaptations (42.1%) Given the low awareness of AtW, this is perhaps unsurprising but depressing reading nonetheless. Other popular responses were the difficulty in accessing support to employ a disabled person (36.8%); non-disabled applicants were better qualified or had more experience (36.8%); and fear of saying the wrong thing (36.8%).

Few applying for jobs	36.84%
Difficulty in adapting role to meet the needs of a disabled applicant	57.89%
Cost of adaptations	42.11%
Health and safety compliance	21.05%
A disabled employee wouldn't be able to the job as well	5.26%
Difficulty accessing support to employ a disabled application	36.84%
Additional training and development	26.32%
Non-disabled applicants were better qualified or had more experience	36.84%
Fear of saying the wrong things/taking a risk/being sued	36.84%
Other (please specify)	15.79%

Are you aware of any of the following? (Please tick as many as apply)
 Awareness of Access to Work was the highest, at 72.2%, followed by Disability Confident at 55.6%, Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) at 33.3% and other tools, also at 33.3%.



Employers' awareness of different programmes seems to support earlier research, such as a report by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC). People were aware of other programmes such as Community Jobs Scotland and Inclusion Scotland internships. A couple of respondents commented that although they were aware of some of the incentives, they hadn't accessed them and wouldn't know how to go about it. One respondent also commented that better access to training was needed [for disabled people] to get qualified to work in the sector.

Given the vital role of employers/managers, and the relatively small amount of research in this area, DAS believes more should be done to speak to employers to better support them to recruit suitable disabled candidates for roles and ensure they are available, and can access, tools that are available.

This survey gives a snapshot of views but the findings are supported by other research, as you will see later in this report.

Review of the policy context and other relevant research

Scottish Government Scotland Act

The Scotland Act (2016) includes some new powers for some programmes (for those at risk of long-term unemployment and to help disabled people into work). These new powers came into force in March 2017 and will initially be delivered through transitional arrangements ahead of a full programme of services in 2018. The two new transitional programmes, Work First and Work Able Scotland commenced in April 2017. From 2017 an additional £20 million per year, over and above the funding transferred from Westminster, has been committed to delivering and improving employment support. However, some aspects of employability, such as Access to Work and JobCentre Plus, will remain reserved.

Fairer Scotland for Disabled People

The 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' plan,⁹ which was published in December 2016, sets out 93 actions which will be taken forward during the current parliamentary term. An overarching aim in the plan is for disabled people to participate fully in education and paid employment enabling their talent and abilities to enrich Scotland. Several of the actions in the plan relate to employment. It includes a commitment to 'at least' halve the employment gap for disabled people and to set a target to increase the percentage of disabled people in the public sector workforce. There is also a congress planned for early 2018.

Developing the Young Workforce Plan

'Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy'¹⁰ reflected findings of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, chaired by Sir Ian Wood, which was established by the Scottish Government in January 2013. In reporting their expert review of Scotland's approach to vocational education and youth employment, the Commission laid out a set of challenges to national and local government, to the education and training system, to employers, and to young people themselves and all who support them. One of the starkest findings in the report was that half of all young people with a declared or assessed disability were in further education nine months after leaving school. However, by the time they were 26 they were four times as likely to be unemployed as their non-disabled peers.¹¹

The remit of the Commission was to explore how Scotland might develop a modern, responsive and valued system for vocational training and emulate the labour markets of the best performing European countries. The Commission's final report was published on 3 June 2014 and set out 39 recommendations, which built upon the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and the extensive reforms of Post 16 Education. This strategy and implementation plan sets out how the Scottish Government will implement the Recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce to drive the creation of a world class vocational education system to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. One of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI 10) was to 'increase the employment rate for young disabled people to the population average by 2021'. Proposed measures included:

- A new work experience model for young disabled people introduced and improved approach to careers services for young disabled people implemented.
- Funding levels to colleges and Modern Apprenticeship (MA) training providers should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the cost of providing additional support to young disabled people, and age restrictions should be relaxed for those whose transition may take longer.
- With MAs, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) should set a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young disabled people. Progress against this should be reported on annually.
- Employers who want to employ a young disabled person should be encouraged and supported to do so.

Fairer Scotland

In October 2016, the 'Fairer Scotland' Action Plan¹² was launched. The plan outlines 50 actions to help tackle poverty, reduce inequality and build a fairer and more inclusive Scotland. Fair work was a strong focus in the Fairer Scotland conversations. A decent standard of living – having a job that treated people fairly and paid a living wage – was a key theme. Support for flexible jobs and flexible working was also seen as vital, as was an end to discrimination – for example, on the grounds of disability – and active support for people who need help to get back into the labour market or to boost their work prospects and progress. The plan references the Scottish Government's Labour Market Strategy,¹³ with a range of actions the Scottish Government would take to help make working lives fairer, including our continued support for the Fair Work Convention. Actions were focused on the Living Wage, promoting good flexible working, improving employment services and employability and tackling discrimination in employment.

Labour Market Strategy

Published in August 2016 as an integral part of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy the Scottish Government's Labour Market Strategy,¹⁴ promotes inclusive growth marshalled around the Scottish Government's five priorities including: Promoting Fair Work and Responsible Business and Employability and Skills. Contained within the strategy, the Scottish Government has committed to develop a Workplace Equality Fund. The Scottish Business Pledge, launched in May 2015, is a voluntary commitment made by Scottish businesses to celebrate, promote and encourage business success based on the practical application of the principles of fairness, equality, and opportunity.

Programmes which encourage employing disabled people

Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) was developed in partnership with local government and in consultation with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the third sector and business organisations, which included SCC. It was created to deliver the Scottish Government's commitment to Developing Scotland's Young Workforce recommendations by simplifying the recruitment incentive offer, focussing on those young people who face barriers to employment, including young people with a disability.

Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) creates work opportunities for young unemployed people within third sector organisations throughout Scotland. CJS is targeted at more vulnerable young people and in particular, is focused on groups of young people who are more disadvantaged in the labour market, such as with a disability.

Inclusion Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government to create internship opportunities for disabled people in Scotland. These internships give valuable paid work experience to help disabled people develop their careers.

Access to Work

Access to Work is a highly-valued scheme. It has been described as the UK Government's "best kept secret".¹⁵ Yet, we have found that only £9,639 was spent to promote AtW in 2016/17,¹⁶ a tiny proportion of the £112m spent in that year on the programme. The Sayce Report¹⁷ suggested that there is a net return of £1.48 for every £1.00 spent on the programme.

Access to Work should be the cornerstone of the Government's current efforts to help more disabled people to participate in the labour market. Inclusion London's recent report 'Barriers to Work'¹⁸ found that 'when it works, AtW is the model of what good disability employment support should look like'. By meeting the extra costs of working with a disability, the scheme levels the playing field for disabled people and enables employers to open up job opportunities, creating a more diverse workforce and a stronger economy. However, top down reorganisation has resulted in poor customer service, including delays and errors.

Almost half of the respondents to the Inclusion London survey, had experienced changes to their AtW package. For the majority of respondents, the reasons for the changes to their support package were not known. However, respondents frequently linked the changes to their support with the call centre reorganisation which began in 2014. Only 15% of respondents said they found AtW easy to apply for, or use. More than half found it difficult to use, with one in four reporting severe difficulty. A great number of respondents said they effectively lost support because the processes for claiming AtW have become so complex and protracted that the scheme was no longer a viable form of employment support. Respondents often referred to AtW processes as "jumping through hoops". Nearly all of those experiencing changes said they had impacted negatively on their work, reducing their standard of work or their productivity. Nine people had lost their job, turned down work or reduced their income as a result of the changes. Many expressed anxiety about losing their job.

Fair Start Scotland

With the devolution of employability programmes, there is a real opportunity to do things differently and provide better support to disabled people into work. As part of the Scottish Government's work to develop Fair Start Scotland, they undertook a literature review of successful approaches to employment support and labour market analysis of protected characteristics and other vulnerable groups using sources including the Annual Population Survey.¹⁹ This looked at a number of areas including: client assessment; how to measure non-employment outcomes; what works for whom; national, regional and locally targeted services; the benefits of private, public or third sector delivery; minimum service standards; partnership to support jobseekers with the most complex needs; encouraging innovation in service delivery; payment by results; contract size, length and shape; best practice in commissioning and management; and mandatory and voluntary programmes.

The Scottish Government has expressed a desire to move from the 'one size fits all' DWP programmes and have commissioned a programme that should be 'designed and delivered in partnership' by consortia. This is a move away from the management heavy supply chain model of prime/sub contracting and should mean we see greater parity and partnership in consortium members delivering in the same area. This aspires for a more collaborative culture and affords greater flexibility around the operations of Fair Start Scotland, to truly meet the needs of people using it.

UK Government

The UK Government talked of working towards 'halving the disability employment gap' for several years, as it was a Conservative Party manifesto commitment ahead of the 2015 general election.²⁰ A date of 2020 was set although this is very unlikely to be met and language seems to have moved away from this, with a greater focus on 'getting a million disabled people into work'.

Department of Work and Pensions

The UK Government has implemented a controversial range of changes to existing programmes that relate to disability employment, including:

- The introduction of a new, much smaller Work and Health Programme to replace both Work Choice and the Work Programme from late 2017, and corresponding changes in the support provided to disabled people through Jobcentre Plus;²¹
- Updating and enhancing the Disability Confident campaign, from 2016;²²
- Funding of £60 million per year from 2017–18, rising to £100 million per year by 2020–21 for practical employment support for disabled people, to be spent according to advice from representatives of disability charities and organisations;²³
- Investing £43 million up to 2019–20 in trialling ways to provide specialist support for people with common mental health conditions, via the Work and Health Joint Unit;²⁴
- Cutting the ESA-WRAG benefit payment and Universal Credit equivalent, bringing it in line with the JSA rate from April 2017;²⁵ despite JSA being an out of work benefit and ESA WRAG being for people who are currently too ill to work;
- Carrying out a consultation on several of aspects of employment support, including the Work Capability Assessment, detailed in Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper²⁶ (see below).

In 2013, the DWP conducted a review of international research on disability and employment. The review found an overall lack of robust international evidence to determine ‘what works for whom’ to help disabled people into, and to remain in, work. However, there is evidence of the success of some interventions, particularly supported employment programmes, with additional positive findings regarding flexible and accommodating workplaces, return-to-work planning and some health interventions (particularly with an employment focus). The review also highlighted that:

- interventions should focus on both individuals and employers;
- availability and awareness of support are important – many of the more successful interventions were small scale or have low take-up;
- early intervention is key, both to prevent individuals leaving employment due to the onset of an impairment, and to ensure early access to the right support for those on benefits;
- employment interventions are only one element of the range of possible initiatives; in particular, focusing on preventing individuals leaving work may have a greater impact on the numbers on disability benefits than employment programmes themselves.²⁷

A paper by Scope came to similar conclusions.²⁸

Work and Pensions Select Committee

In 2015, the Westminster Work and Pensions Select Committee undertook an inquiry into the disability employment gap.²⁹ The conclusions and recommendations relate to reserved matters but they are useful for devolved issues too.

A submission from The Shaw Trust indicated that a higher proportion of disabled people who are economically inactive want to work, compared to their non-disabled counterparts. One part of the challenge is, therefore, to consider how those who are disabled and unemployed or economically inactive, but who could work given the correct support and working environment, can be helped to do so. The Committee also found that reducing the disability employment gap is not simply a matter of getting currently unemployed disabled people into work. The UK Government must also look to stem the flow of people from work into unemployment due to ill-health. This is because:

- There is substantial evidence that being in appropriate employment is good for health, and that having a disability need not necessitate dropping out of work;³⁰
- 83% of people who have a disability acquire it while they are in work;³¹
- Some 400,000 people leave the workforce after developing a disability or work-limiting condition each year;
- More people will work into older age in future. As older people are more likely to be ill or disabled, the prevalence of illness and disability in the working-age people will increase.³²

The Committee concluded that there is a major role for in-work support for disabled people. It also illustrates a need for support for employers to help their employees to stay in work, to proactively address causes of ill-health at work, and to bring about cultural change on work and disability.

This imperative has been recognised in a number of reviews on work and health: notably Dame Carol Black’s ‘Working for a Healthier Tomorrow’ and the subsequent ‘Review of Sickness Absence’, and Liz Sayce’s review, ‘Getting in, Staying in and Getting on’.³³

It was noted that the Department had chosen not to set absolute targets for reducing the disability employment gap, but that clear reporting and measures of progress are “essential to keeping the goal of halving the gap in focus and ensuring transparency over whether and where progress is being made”.

The Committee stated that achieving the UK Government’s ambitions on the disability employment gap will require a sustained commitment from a range of different agencies, Government Departments and external stakeholders. Businesses have a vital leadership role to play, and bringing in health and education services is also of great importance.

Work and Health Green Paper

The Department for Work and Pensions published the 'Work, Health and Disability: Improving Lives' green paper³⁴ in October 2016 for consultation. The paper proposed a number of measures including the role of employers and work coaches, further changes to the welfare system including more conditionality even for people who have been judged too ill to work. DAS and others have expressed concern over some of the proposed measures and we are waiting for the UK Government to respond to the consultation.

Scottish Affairs Committee

The Scottish Affairs Committee in Westminster is currently undertaking an inquiry into sustainable employment and we have provided written and oral evidence and will also share a copy of this report. The Committee also held a one-off evidence session into the closure of JobCentres. On 7 December 2016, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced that eight of the 16 Jobcentre Plus offices in Glasgow were to be closed, alongside other closures or moves across the UK to 'streamline' the whole Jobcentre network. The Committee highlighted concerns that the Department may not have considered the needs of the most vulnerable members of society who rely on the facilities provided by Jobcentres.³⁵

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

As part of the UN's criticisms of the UK Government's austerity agenda and its impact on disabled people, the UN declared in November 2016 that there was evidence of 'grave or systematic violations' of several articles of the UNCRPD including article 27 (work and employment).³⁶

Taylor Review

The Taylor Review³⁷ on modern employment practices, an independent review commissioned by the UK Government, was launched in October 2016 and the findings were published in July 2017. Among various issues raised by the review, it highlighted the importance of flexible working for disabled people and people with caring responsibilities, and also that employers identified that there was an 'untapped pool of talent' that included disabled people.



Other relevant research

Attitudes

'Working for Change: Improving attitudes to hearing loss in the workplace' was published in January 2017³⁸ by Action on Hearing Loss. A similar report, *Work in progress: Rethinking employment support for disabled people* was published by Action on Hearing Loss, Mencap, Mind, RNIB and Scope.³⁹ The report highlights the need for reform of the current system within which many people with disabilities remain far from the workplace; and makes recommendations on how to provide better support. The report has several recommendations which DAS supports, including:

- There needs to be greater involvement of employers in the design and delivery of employment support;
- The Government should incentivise greater localisation of employment support for disabled people in order to stimulate innovation;
- A more targeted approach should be taken for young disabled people who face particular challenges and often cannot access effective support.

Recent research⁴⁰ also found that almost half of disabled people have worried about making employers aware of their impairment or condition and 48% of disabled people were unaware of their rights as a disabled employee. Alongside this, more than one in four disabled people also believed they have missed out on being offered a job because of their condition or impairment.

A report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) highlighted the fact that disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to identify that they have been subject to unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and harassment at work.⁴¹

In terms of addressing attitudes, encouraging behaviour change (whether on this topic or other issues) can be challenging. One aspect may be awareness campaigns, supported by education and training. There have been various attempts at this, whether it be 'Disability Confident',⁴² 'End the awkward' by Scope,⁴³ recent videos and other materials from the Scottish Government, and various others. But these require resourcing and support, and other measures to ensure they are successful over time.

Poverty

One of the benefits of working is the income it brings. However, even for those in work, there can still be relatively high levels of poverty. As recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) research⁴⁴ has found, among households in working poverty, three in ten contain a family member with a disability. There are a number of employability and social security measures that would help address this.

Employers' perspectives

The Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC) put together a report for the Scottish Government. This followed the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. The SCC engaged with businesses to gather their views on the issues around the employment of young disabled people and to raise the profile of the issue in the agendas of these businesses and developed a comprehensive report. They found that very little is from an employer's perspective and even less considers the perceptions of employers considering hiring a disabled person. This lack of knowledge was identified in a report commissioned by the then Scottish Executive in 2005 and very little seems to have changed in that regard since then.⁴⁵

As one employer said:

"Employers are missing out if they aren't getting disabled workers. There are misperceptions about what a disabled person can do – there's nothing that can't be worked out. If there is a willingness to do a job then we should value that...Give people a chance."

Another employer said:

"Perception is the biggest barrier...you need to see past the disability and see the different abilities."

Unfortunately, there was low awareness of key initiatives and programmes, such as Disability Confident, Access to Work and SERI.

The report also cites an earlier employer survey which highlighted the following in terms of employer attitudes:

"Concerns among employers in relation to employing disabled people included perceived risks to productivity; concerns over the implications (financial and otherwise) of making workplace adjustments; confusion over legislation and required practices, and negative perceptions of legislation."

Another barrier to employment flagged by this report was the reluctance of a disabled person to disclose impairments or health conditions that may be necessary to enable adjustments to working to be made. In addition, a 2015 survey by Mencap found that 23% of employers felt that colleagues would not be happy working with somebody with a learning disability.⁴⁶

Of the businesses that responded to the survey undertaken by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, a large majority (85.7%) stated that they did not currently employ a young disabled person (or are not aware that they do). Less than 10% of firms stated that they employed a young disabled person. For those employers that do currently employ a young disabled person 38% are full time and 27% work part time. Additionally, 18% are apprentices and 15% are either temporary or work on a contractual basis. In terms of their role within the business, the majority of workers are either clerical or skilled/unskilled, with 35% being clerical workers and 35% being semi/unskilled workers. When asked what they believed barriers were to employing a young disabled person in their workplace, the majority believed that few disabled people apply for the jobs advertised (50%). Other barriers included difficulty in adapting roles to meet the needs of a disabled applicant (38.7%) and the costs of adaptations for a disabled worker (25.7%).

The SCC found that many employers want to play their part but, for some, finding the right support at the right time has proved to be frustrating. Businesses need responsive advice and support, and above all need a 'one stop shop' capable of delivering appropriate support whenever it is required. The SCC also concluded that a business case needed to be made – and can be made – that will help cement the value of engaging positively with disability.

Policy calls and next steps

There are a range of measures that can be undertaken to reduce the disability employment gap. We have focused on actions that would have the most impact.

Disability employment gap

- DAS calls for action to ensure the disability employment gap is reduced and that commitments by the UK and Scottish Governments to reduce the disability employment gap are realised. We welcome Commitment 28 in 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' to develop a timetable and plan to achieve this ambition. **A deadline of 2025 should be set, with targets set for reducing the gap, and other measures, which we are keen to further discuss and develop with the Scottish Government.**
- **Targets should be set** as this will encourage activity and progress. Interim targets would be useful for measuring progress and success in reducing the disability employment gap but they need to be meaningful and with proportionate intervention and funding, achievable. Performance targets should be transparent, including categorising of disability not to create a 'hierarchy' of disability but to give insight into data, as well, as how jobs have been created. There should also be additional targets on people moving towards employment, such as into training, volunteering or paid work experience.
- **Measures that should be supported to make steps towards the ambition of halving the disability employment gap are outlined below. As the 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' plan has a number of actions on employment, we reference several key actions from the plan below.**

Public sector

- The 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People'⁴⁷ (action 29) highlights that disabled people are 20% of the population, but make up only 11% of the private sector workforce and 11.7% of the public sector workforce. The Scottish Government intends to consult with organisations and public sector bodies around setting targets to redress this imbalance. We believe a good starting point would be to set a target of 20% (i.e. equality) by the 2025 deadline for halving the employment gap.
- Public sector bodies should show leadership, through their recruitment practices and also, for example, through their procurement policies, such as their use of reserved employment contracts, by employing disabled people as well as working with the voluntary sector to engage other disability-friendly employers.

Person-centred employment support

- One size does not fit all. There needs to be specialised support for individuals, providing person-centred and where necessary intensive support based on individual need.
- There should be recognition in their commissioning arrangements that a 'job outcome' that involves working at least 16 hours a week may not be an appropriate measure of success for some disabled people or long term health conditions. The Government should develop performance indicators that include customer satisfaction, improvements to wellbeing, and distance travelled towards work.
- The Scottish Government should compare and evaluate providers' services to further develop the evidence-base around supporting people to return to work.
- Disabled people, and organisations experienced in providing person-centred support, should be involved in the design of employability services.
- Progression towards work must be seen as a positive outcome within the new programmes. Moving someone into education, training, volunteering or work placement schemes should be a paid outcome for the employability provider.
- For providers of employment support services, there should be more transparent tendering processes and clear KPIs/outcomes and review of them. A review of this is ongoing and we will be following this closely.

Greater support for employers

- If progress towards reducing the disability employment gap is to really succeed, work must be done to engage and support employers to recruit and support disabled people. For example, employment of disabled people could be more closely linked to community benefit clauses (CBC), where businesses that can prove they are supportive of a diverse workforce, benefit from public sector contracts. The principle being that public money should go to businesses that are supporting people who are furthest away from employment, for economic as well as social reasons.

Fair Start Scotland

- When the contracts for Fair Start Scotland were announced, we were disappointed that third sector providers, experienced in providing individual and tailored support, were not given a greater role in the new scheme. Supported Employment and Individual Placement and Support were cited as requirements of Fair Start Scotland, but there was little detail on how this will be offered or accredited by providers of this service. Both models have fidelity to established standards and are proven to be more effective in supporting disabled people into work. The Scottish Government should ensure that all Fair Start Scotland providers offer these models of support to fidelity and with no restrictions by postcode. It is vital for the success of the programme that there is transparency and appropriate monitoring from the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government should require prime providers to specify how they will make sure that disabled people or people with long term health conditions, will receive a tailored and person-centred service, and play an active role in monitoring how they deliver on those commitments at a local level. This should include publishing regular data and qualitative evaluations throughout the lifetime of the programme.

- The Work First and Work Able contracts have presented a number of operational issues, largely to do with relationships between the Scottish Government, Department for Work and Pensions and Skills Development Scotland. While we recognise that there are challenges, there needs to be closer working and cooperation between these, and other, organisations.

Access to Work

- We had understood that the DWP had plans to promote Access to Work but there needs to be additional funding for Access to Work, and promotion of Access to Work more widely among key audiences including employers and disabled people who are looking for employment or in work. The DWP should also measure the effectiveness of the marketing undertaken. The DWP should examine how it can speed-up Access to Work claims to ensure people can access the support they need efficiently, and that there aren't any disincentives for employers not to hire disabled people. Access to Work should also be available for work experience and Modern Apprenticeships, although DAS members have experienced mixed messages about this. Data should also be gathered and published annually to determine the outcomes of applications to awards, broken down by condition. The DWP should undertake research to examine the extent to which employers are receiving and accepting requests for reasonable adjustments and flexible working under the Equality Act and what could be done to ensure greater awareness and understanding among employers and employees. There is a case that there is a need for greater take up in Scotland, as there is anecdotal evidence that we are not currently receiving proportionate support. Parliamentary questions (PQs) and the recent publication of data have highlighted this⁴⁸ although there is a need for more data and analysis on this, which DAS is progressing.
- We support and call on the Scottish Government to ensure full implementation of action 32 of the 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' plan, and 'actively promote the scheme to employers and disabled people to ensure a higher uptake and use of the scheme in Scotland', alongside other programmes like SERI.
- A review of Access to Work to make it fit for purpose should be undertaken and include:
 - Improved clarity and flexibility around eligibility
 - Additional funding for areas of unmet need identified by the House of Commons Work & Pensions Committee inquiry,⁴⁹ especially for people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, young disabled people trying to enter work for the first time, and people found fit for work as a result of the Employment and Support Allowance eligibility process
 - Widening the scope to provide on-going support for people at risk of falling out the labour market.
 - The other issues raised above.

Preparatory work in education and skills

- Action 20 in the 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People'⁵⁰ states that the Scottish Government 'will work with schools, local authorities, health and social care partnerships, further and higher education institutions and employers to improve the lives of young disabled people. This includes points of transition into all levels of education – primary, secondary further and higher – education and employment'.
- DAS is calling for additional measures to support preparatory work in education and skills. There needs to be more information and greater support for young disabled people to enter further / higher education and the workforce. Specialist organisations should collaborate with schools and colleges in order to support employability education for young people.

- Disabled young people will be supported through the 'Developing the Young Workforce', Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy (also referenced in action 35 of the 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' plan). DAS is keen to see reporting on progress of the implementation of the 'Developing the Young Workforce' Strategy to ensure progress is made.

Apprenticeship levy

- DAS would welcome an increase in the number of starts by disabled people on apprenticeships, but this will only likely be achieved if: the funding levels for specific frameworks are increased; the definition of priority sectors is expanded beyond STEM to retail, care and management / leadership occupations; and
- funding age bands are changed to 16-19, 20-29, and 30 plus.
- As outlined in the 'Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' plan, a proportion of MAs should be set aside for disabled people and this should be reported on annually. Reporting should be based on profile of disability to allow for effective management of resource and to manage accessibility/need.

Health and Work Green Paper

- We recommend that the DWP make the Health and Work Conversation optional for new ESA claimants. The DWP should not introduce any further conditionality into the out of work sickness benefits system, and should review the effectiveness of current back-to-work conditionality on return-to-work rates for disabled people. The DWP must ensure that all back-to-work support is supportive and activity is undertaken with the consent of the individual in question.

- The DWP must commit to protecting the number of DEAs in future and ensuring they receive continuous training in order to help them effectively support Work Coaches. There must be greater coordination between the DWP and UK's health services, where appropriate, so the person receives greater information at appointments and diagnosis, in some instances, of the support they can receive to stay in their current job, retrain or seek a new job. Data sharing should be allowed but privacy must be protected and all due care taken. DWP must work with the Scottish Government to facilitate this. DAS calls on the DWP not to introduce targeted 'support' to Support Group claimants. Work Coaches must be provided with extensive training around referrals. They should be equipped to understand what the Work and Health Programme looks like in their area and have sensitive conversations with people with disabilities and long term health conditions about whether it is the right approach for them. More should be done to encourage take up of 'Fit for Work'. This would require greater funding, including for advertising and training for GPs.

Disability Confident

- DAS welcomes any initiatives which genuinely seek to reduce barriers into employment for disabled people but we are not aware that the Disability Confident campaign has led to significant change for disabled people. Whilst the Disability Confident campaign has produced useful information and resources which seek to tackle this, there is still a need for additional support to get disabled job seekers to the stage where they are ready for employment and then to help employers access and use these resources. DAS believes DWP needs to commission an evaluation of the campaign to measure success and any lessons to be learned.

JobCentre Plus

- Jobcentre Plus should be broadened to include job retention and readiness. It must become a genuine gateway for a full range of employment services, accessible to all disabled people. JobCentre Plus should also be better co-ordinated with other services. DAS calls for an expansion of the role and number of Disability Employment Advisers, reflecting that the primary function of Jobcentre Plus should be to support and assist people into sustainable jobs. All Jobcentre staff must be trained in disability awareness. We are deeply concerned by the planned closures of JobCentres across the UK, and specifically in Glasgow, since this will impede people's ability to access advice and support for social security and employment and will affect the most vulnerable the most – especially people who are deaf and require face-to-face communication with the support of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. We believe there needs to be improved access to advocacy support and advice for disabled people. This is even more important at a time of increasing digitalisation and when proposed closures of job centres will remove existing support.

Complexity of employability support landscape

- The current complex employability landscape can be particularly challenging for disabled people to navigate. While the devolution of employment programmes offers opportunities for better alignment with the programmes of Skills Development Scotland and other devolved initiatives, greater co-location and formal mechanisms to govern the Jobcentre Plus network in Scotland are needed. Additionally, there must be improved visibility and accessibility of opportunities for potential employers and employees. More could be done to ensure joined up services and a clearer picture for disabled people and employers, such as a single 'one-stop shop' portal. Particularly in the context of enhanced devolution, we strongly urge the UK and Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners to work closely together to ensure joined up, evidence-based and cost-effective employment support for disabled people.

Accessible information/communications

- All agencies should ensure that different formats are available and information is accessible to different audiences, and that the system is not 'digital by default'.

Pilots

- There is an opportunity for the Scottish Government to pilot some new measures to further test what works best. This would involve working with specialist providers of employment support to test tailored approaches; and we recommend the Department test a range of approaches to incentivising employers, using a collection of small trials.

Annex: Case studies

We have included some case studies to illustrate how support and/or reasonable adaptations can help people to get into, and stay in, work.

'All In Edinburgh' Case Study: Positive Paths

I have helped a client into a support worker role with the SME, Positive Paths in Edinburgh. Her job is to support young people in their homes and also accompany them to The Yard to interact with others and join in activities. My client's main barriers are anxiety and dyslexia. I helped my client to fill in the application form, used interview coaching to build her confidence and introduced myself to my client's new manager after she had accepted the job. Since then, the manager has contacted me whenever there has been an issue, and we have held reviews to monitor progress. We have also ensured that written work is kept to a minimum and that my client only works with service users that she feels comfortable with - avoiding raising her anxiety levels. After my client experienced some initial issues with low self esteem we have also organised extra hours and shadowing days to build her confidence.

Classic Autosports

Forrest came to us in 2015 to do Stage2 EF. His support requirements were as a result of; dyslexia and poor mental health. He is low skilled and left school in 2nd year. He completed Stage 2 with us and then moved onto Stage 3 with another provider, Craigowl. Craigowl placed him with an employer in Montrose as a mechanic but he was left to his own devices and without the right support things did not work out for him. As a result he stopped engaging, his confidence and motivation crushed, his self-esteem at an all time low. In September 2016 he reengaged with SDS and they asked if I had spaces on Stage 3. I met with him and decided that we could help. Forrest was taking part in the CWR (Certificate of Work Readiness). I sourced possible work placements for him at 3 garages, we met with all 3 and we both decided that Classic Autosports Ltd in Inverkeilor

Gingerbread Childcare

Rachel has been working with 'All In Edinburgh' since the project began and at first struggled to find an area she wanted to work in. She had never worked and felt very anxious about the prospect of having a job. She has a learning difficulty and needs support with reading and writing but she mainly was extremely low in confidence which had affected her mental health in the past. She decided one area she would like to try was childcare. Many providers needed someone who had prior experience. However Gingerbread Childcare were willing to take Rachel for a work placement to gain this necessary experience in their after school club. Rachel was supported by her employment worker on placement initially, however the manager allocated her a buddy and the staff were so supportive that soon Rachel had the confidence to attend independently. She became very comfortable and happy in her surroundings and eventually a paid opportunity became available which Rachel and her employment worker discussed with the manager at Gingerbread Childcare. Rachel was keen with support to take this opportunity and now enjoys working there. Gingerbread continues to support Rachel and keep in touch with All In Edinburgh. They have since provided another placement opportunity for another All In Edinburgh client.

would be the best fit for him. Forrest did an 8 week placement working with the garage and loved it. During that time I provided off the job support for my client, working with the company and Forrest to continually review how he was getting on. Ensuring that any issues would be quickly resolved. As a result of Forrest's hard work, and my employability support, Classic Autosports Ltd offered Forrest a Modern Apprenticeship and he jumped at the chance to take it. He is still in employment and loves his job..

Lynsey Moffat is a contract administrator within the Accountant in Bankruptcy, an agency of the Scottish Government based in Kilwinning.

She developed keratoconus nine years ago, a condition resulting in the cornea being cone-shaped, making vision more short-sighted and irregular. The shape frequently changes, resulting in many optician and ophthalmic appointments to change her prescription. This is a hereditary condition.

Lynsey left school after taking her standard grades and eventually joined the Accountant in Bankruptcy in 2005. She has gained temporary promotion and attended various training courses. Her current role is to administer ongoing bankruptcy cases which involve processing information on a web-based portal as well as the Agency's in-house systems.

"I currently have two large-screen computer monitors and ZoomText software. RNIB Scotland's employment team reassessed me after my cornea transplant and made recommendations to use other software called Supernova. My employer is in the process of putting this in place and arranging training to allow me to use it to its full potential and carry out my daily functions more easily."

The main problem in terms of the physical location was the design of the office building, which has lots of glass windows. "My eye condition makes me very sensitive to light," explains Lynsey. "This issue resulted in me getting a lot of headaches, almost like a constant migraine. My colleagues have been very accommodating and the problem has eased by placing a tinted film over the windows. My team has also been issued with desk lamps to allow me to switch off the ceiling lights in our area and are happy to use these if they find it too dim."

She feels lucky that her employer is willing to give people with a disability that bit of extra support they require. "My senior managers, line manager and union rep have always been very supportive," she says. "I've had previous employers who weren't; one told me I should just go part-time. "I'd say to all employers: don't judge people until you're aware of what their abilities are, not their disability."

Her line manager, Evlynne McCubbin, commented: "Lynsey is a pleasure to work with and an invaluable member of our team. The level of support she requires is minimal due to her positive attitude to dealing with her disability. Working with RNIB, minor recommendations were all that were required to allow Lynsey to continue to work full time. Adjustments such as the position of her seat, the level of lighting and magnifying software have created a suitable environment for Lynsey to perform no differently from any other employee. "Lynsey is respected by her colleagues who are very supportive of her needs. She is inspirational to others, showing that, with just a few adaptations to her working environment, she can continue to work full time and pursue her goals."

Allan Milne is a senior lecturer in software engineering at the school of engineering, computing and applied mathematics at the University of Abertay, Dundee.

"A lot of things I do aren't so much jobs as responsibilities. I teach undergraduate through to postgraduate students up to PhD level, undertake research and generally offer support to colleagues based on my 34 years experience," says Alan who has had a deteriorating sight condition all of his life.

"My sight loss wasn't sudden, though. I wore glasses since I was three years old and this was enough for me to do my highers and a degree in computational science at St Andrew's University, then a masters.

"However, when I was 21 my sight was deteriorating and my optician referred me to the eye clinic. They diagnosed cone rod dystrophy; it's similar to retinitis pigmentosa. I can just make out the light from the window in my office, so I'm now more or less totally blind. But I've been fortunate in one way. The evolution of my needs happens to have coincided with the evolution of new technology. What I've needed has become available."

When Allan first began work, he used a magnifying glass to read computer code. But in 1979 when he joined Dundee College of Technology, which eventually became the University of Abertay, he went from using a CCTV for many years, to using screen magnification software, and now a screen-reader.

"I'm the course leader for the BSc computing course and adviser of studies for all the students in this particular school. I also teach our flagship third-year computer games technology course (a field in which Abertay excels). I've got my students on this course to create an audio-only computer game. No graphics allowed. I'm quite proud of this course," he enthuses. "It's one I've developed and is, think, pretty unique.

"The university has provided me with all the equipment I've required. They've recently got me a lightweight computer, a Mac-book Air, and the screen-reading software I require. Some of this is supported by the Government's Access to Work scheme. And they've made a few amendments to my job specification. For instance, I don't have to invigilate examinations, for obvious reasons! And I do have to be accompanied to conferences. But that's really about all I've needed.

"Because I have a guide dog I've got my own room in this open-plan office. The only real problem is the curves in the general layout of this floor we're on. They can be difficult in trying to orientate yourself."

What are his ambitions for the future? "To retire gracefully (hopefully with a pension I can live on)," he smiles. "I'd also like to develop further my audio-programming interest, and to digitise my own music collection at home. I'm a great hi-fi buff, and being a software engineer, I should be able to do this."

To employers who insist they couldn't possibly take on someone with sight loss, Alan's response is: "Prove it! People with sight loss shouldn't have to justify why they can do the job they've applied for. The employer should justify why they think they can't. If anything, I probably pay more attention than most people. I'm not distracted by what's going on elsewhere. And I find my colleagues can be grateful when you ask for something to be clarified. I have an excuse to ask for more information, or have some item explained further, when sometimes others might not want to speak out. Employees with sight loss can bring a whole new perspective to how people and organisations work."

Notes

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- 20 <https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto2015>
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- 39 <https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/disability-charities-consortium-calls-for-urgent-rethink-on-employment-support-for-people-with-disabilities/#.WfnBD2eDOP8>
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About Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS)

Founded in 1998, DAS is an alliance of Scotland's major disability organisations. Together our experience, expertise and interests cover physical disability, sensory impairment, learning disability, communication support needs and mental health.

Working closely with the thousands of disabled children, young people and adults, families and carers involved with the member organisations, DAS aims to: influence public policy and legislation to help disabled people and the people around them; provide a forum for decision makers and influencers to obtain advice and information; and promote a better understanding of the diverse experiences, needs and aspirations of disabled people. DAS focuses on the issues that will have the most impact for disabled people in Scotland.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss, please contact Layla Theiner (Layla@disabilityagenda.scot; 07876 865342).

