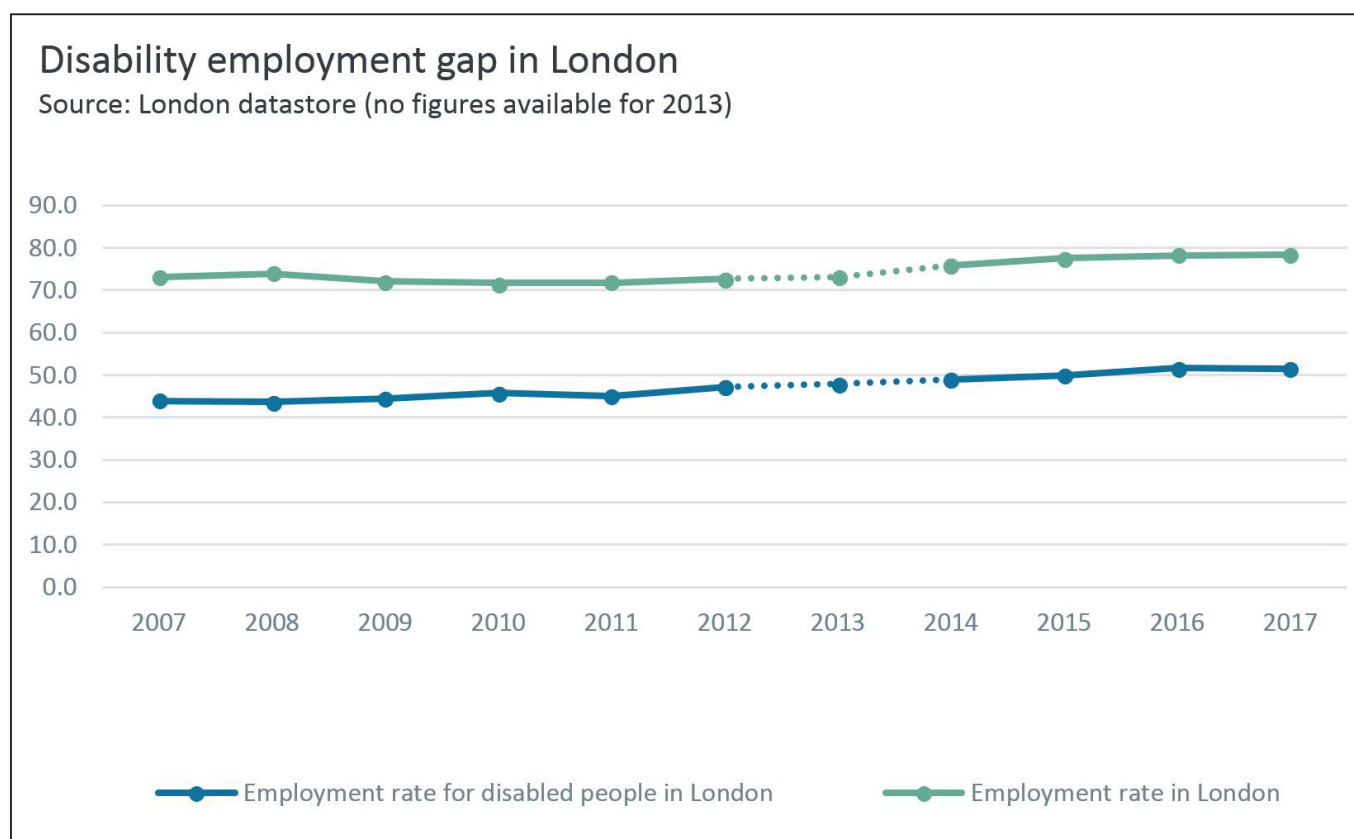


Tackling London's disability employment gap

London Assembly Economy Committee
Thursday 21 March 2019

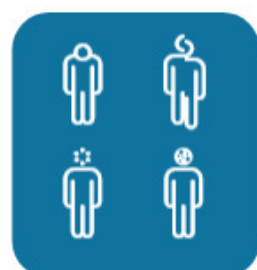
Despite the increase in London's overall employment rate over the past decade, the gap in the rate for those with a disability and those without has barely shifted over the past 30 years. The graph below shows that in London the gap is stuck at around 27 percentage points, which is slightly lower than the UK gap.



The Economy Committee set out to investigate why this gap persists and what changes need to take place in the workplace to support more disabled people into work and to progress through their career. Here's what we found out:

1. Just around half of all disabled Londoners are in work; about 1 in 10 are self-employed.
2. Many disabled Londoners lack the higher-level qualifications necessary to access many of the jobs London creates.
3. While there are many government sponsored schemes, a third of disabled Londoners were not aware of the schemes and another third were aware but didn't know how to access them.

FACTS AND FIGURES



866,000

Disabled Londoners
of working age (16-64)



340,000

Disabled Londoners
employed



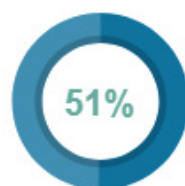
88,000

Disabled Londoners
self-employed



438,000

Disabled Londoners
not in work



Employment
Rate for
Disabled
Londoners



Employment
Rate for
Non-
disabled
Londoners

**27
pp**

Disability
Employment
Gap



Skills gap

Only 14% of economically active disabled Londoners have a degree or more, compared to 58% of the total economically active population in London



Locked in

39% of disabled workers feel they are locked in to their current career and would struggle to change jobs, compared to just 19% of non-disabled workers



Less supported

31% of disabled workers don't feel supported to progress by senior management, compared to 18% of non-disabled workers



Government Support

One third of disabled workers are not aware of any government support for training, and another third are aware it exists but don't know how to access it

Why does the employment gap persist?

Disabled Londoners of working age (16-64) are three times less likely to be in work than non-disabled Londoners. From our discussions with employability teams, organisations and Londoners about the challenges faced by disabled people during their journey to employment we have identified the following barriers.

Barriers to work

Barriers linked to the workplace:

- Lack of flexibility and inclusiveness.
- Autonomy the individual has over their own careers.
- Concerns about bullying and harassment
- Negative assumptions about the capabilities of disabled people in the workplace.
- Unknown about the employer's culture.

Barriers linked to the economy:

- Lack of availability of jobs in local area.
- Changing labour markets, such as the polarisation of the labour market, undermine disabled people's opportunities to benefit from the growth.



Barriers linked to the skill gap:

- Disabled adults are less likely to have a degree level qualification than the wider London population.
- When disabled people lack qualifications they are affected more severely than non-disabled people without qualifications: only 17% of disabled people with no qualifications are in employment.

Barriers linked to support and information:

- Lack of tailored support to individual needs.
- A high proportion of disabled people (22.5%) have never used the internet compared to non-disabled people (4.9%).

What did Londoners say?

We asked Londoners on Talk London, the City Hall's online community, what they thought were the main challenges faced by disabled people when looking for work and what support they would like to see. Three themes emerged:

Transportation and accessible infrastructure

Improved transport is a must

"Improved access to public transport needs to be made a matter of priority for people with a disability. Step free access to all London Underground stations should be made a priority to enable those who could travel to work on public transport a preferable option. Outer London boroughs on the Underground network are overlooked and this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

I was considered a nuisance

"I am a wheelchair user. I used to travel in my car with my manual wheelchair in the passenger seat. However parking was a major problem as there was no designated disabled parking. Even if I managed to find an ordinary parking space I used to have to change that space every three hours. The buildings I worked in had stairs, as did many of the buildings I had to visit as part of my job. I ended up missing vital meetings and, feeling side-lined or a nuisance. I quit the job because I was, through no fault of my own, unreliable."

Employer and workplace culture

Employers only saw my disability

"Most employers would will not look at an application from a disabled applicant. As a disabled person I sent out 350 application and got no interviews, I sent out 10 not mentioned my disability and got one interview, the disabled need some help, not in just getting jobs, but getting to the workplace."

Companies must practice what they preach

"Recruitment practice quality varies enormously. Often roles are advertised requiring candidates to own and drive vehicles, for example, which discriminates against people with disabilities who might use other means to travel for work. Recruitment agencies often insist on using telephone conversations to assess suitability, which may exclude people with disabilities affecting speech or hearing."

"Candidates are required to demonstrate values embracing equalities and diversity policy, but employers' recruitment procedures fail to embody that policy in practice: shoddy design of forms; glitchy online application processes; illegible text in bad fonts, small white writing on light backgrounds, tests that do not reflect the skills and abilities required."

Employment support and benefits

Cuts will not help

“My son has a learning disability and ensuring he had a job when he left college was a real worry. We were very fortunate in that a really proactive worker at the Community Access Project in Islington supported him to find a local job where he has been for two years. But it was often by chance that I found out about services which could help.

“There is a lot of talk about supporting disabled people into work but it requires joining up of services eg education, employers, local authority, to make sure the disabled person is adequately supported. The statistics show that if you are disabled it will be much harder to find employment, especially if you have a learning disability. I am not sure how this can be improved with significant cuts to services in recent years?”

Only ‘proper’ jobs counted

“In one of my roles we had an Occupational Therapist working with the Job Centre to try to get people with disabilities into work, but the ‘rules’ of the initiative were that people could only stay on the scheme a limited time, and success was only counted when someone gained a ‘proper’ job.

“The OT did a lot of work with people with mental health problems, who often took a long time to engage with the scheme but sometimes were able to take up a voluntary work role. As they were not in a proper job yet, it didn’t count and the scheme eventually lost its funding, despite real progress being made with many long-term unemployed people with disabilities.”

What can employers do?

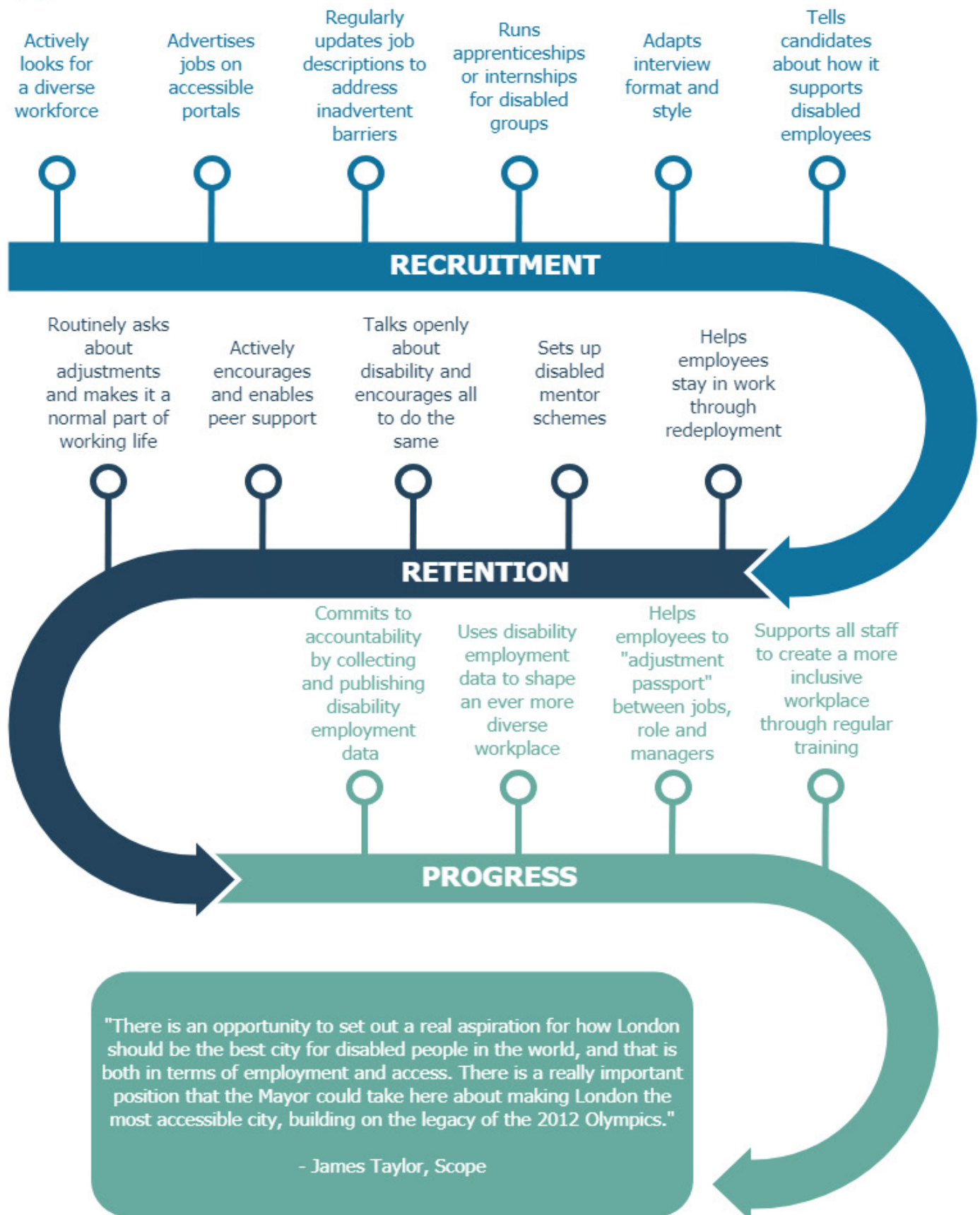
During our investigation we heard that employers have not adjusted sufficiently to the needs of disabled people in London. A lot of the barriers to work we heard about are linked to a lack of good employment practices or inclusive workplaces.

This means that employers need to change their practices and challenge their prevailing workplace culture. Being a more inclusive business means accessing an untapped talent pool, improving diversity in decision-making and innovation, and increasing work satisfaction and productivity.

Making this shift is a challenge particularly for small businesses as they may not have an HR structure to advise them on how to employ and make adjustments for disabled employees, and other positive actions they can take to make a difference. This is a lost opportunity for both parties. Small businesses can be good employers for disabled people as they are often more flexible and more personable employers.

We found that where businesses want to make that change they need support to understand the kinds of adjustments a disabled person might need to find work or stay in work as this can vary considerably from person to person, depending on the condition or impairment they have. They can also vary over time; with many disabled people’s conditions fluctuating and changing, sometimes even on a daily basis.

On the next page, we map what the journey of a good 21st century employer looks like, at three key stages: recruitment, retention and career progression.



Recommendations

If London wants to be the best big city for disabled people to live and work, a lot needs to change. We want the Mayor to use his powers and influence to act as a catalyst for change:

Disability Employment Taskforce for London

1. We support the Social Market Foundation and Trust for London's call for the Mayor to constitute a Disability Employment Taskforce. The Taskforce would be comprised of representatives from disability charities (including Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations), service providers, central and local government and disabled people themselves.

It would be a centre of expertise and knowledge sharing. It would drive and stimulate actions to support disabled people into work and progress while in work. It would advise the Mayor and London Government on the best way to tackle the disability employment gap, and support employers and employees to create inclusive workplaces where people of all abilities and talents can flourish.

The Mayor should chair the inaugural meeting to show his commitment to supporting good quality employment opportunities for disabled Londoners.

The Taskforce's priority would be to:

- Investigate why some London boroughs have seen an increase in the disability employment gap in recent years.
- Provide strategic guidance on the best ways for the Adult Education Budget.
- to support disabled Londoners to access the right education and skills opportunities.
- Facilitate more joined up thinking between DWP programmes and Adult Education providers to ensure that disabled people are better able to access the skills they need to secure and progress in employment.
- Encourage local disability peer networks that cover more than one organisation.

The Growth Hub

2. The Mayor's London Enterprise and Action Partnership (LEAP) should create a distinct space on its Growth Hub website offering guidance to disabled people on self-employment. It should look to sponsor workshops for disabled entrepreneurs. This could take a similar format to the newly created programme of events for BAME and Female Founders.

3. The LEAP should consider allocating a share of its newly established small and medium-sized enterprises fund, the Greater London Investment Fund, to disabled entrepreneurs wishing to scale up.

4. Small businesses face extra barriers to hire disabled people and need guidance. The LEAP should use the Growth Hub to actively promote the work of companies such as the Disability Business Forum, which provides help and guidance to businesses on hiring disabled people.

Good Work Standard

5. We welcome the focus on diversity in the Mayor's Good Work Standard, which includes a focus on the disability employment gap. The Mayor must use his Good Work Standard to actively engage employers with London's disability employment gap. As such, the Good Work Standard should promote the good employment practice identified in our journey of a good 21st century employer. In addition, an action plan to increase disability employment should be one of the required criteria for companies to gain accreditation.

Where can I get help?

If London wants to be the best big city for disabled people to live and work, a lot needs to change. We want the Mayor to use his powers and influence to act as a catalyst for change:

As an employer?

1. The Government's Disability Confident employer scheme.
2. An 'adjustment passport' is a live record of adjustments agreed between an employee and this employer to support employees' with a health condition, impairment or disability at work.
3. Disability Confident and CIPD guide for line managers on employing people with a disability or health condition.
4. Business Disability Forum is a not-for-profit membership organisation that makes it easier and more rewarding to do business with and employ disabled people.
5. Remploy's mission is to transform the lives of disabled people and those experiencing complex barriers to work.

As a disabled person?

1. The DFN Charitable Foundation is a UK registered charity whose aim is promoting programmes which significantly improve the employment prospects of young people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions.
2. Scope exists to make this country a place where disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else.
3. Inclusion London's mission is to promote Deaf and Disabled people's equality and inclusion by supporting Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations and campaigning for rights for Deaf and Disabled people across the UK.
4. Remploy helps individuals finding work and supports them in work.
5. The Poppy Factory's employability team supports hundreds of wounded, injured and sick veterans into employment in their communities.

Useful references

1. National Grid: EmployAbility scheme is an employee-led supported Internship programme for young people aged 17- 25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
2. Microsoft: Inclusive Hiring Programme is a programme that enables individuals and organisations around world to do great things.
3. Barclays, Lord Mayor and City of London: This is me campaign is an initiative designed to remove the stigma around mental health by the sharing of personal stories.
4. Sainsbury's: You can is an initiative to support people who might otherwise struggle to find work in the retail sector. The programme has recruited 26,000 people since 2008 by working with partner organisation such as Mencap, People Plus, Jobcentre Plus to remove the barriers that some people face when looking for work.
5. Amazon: Affinity Groups bring Amazon employees together across businesses and geographies. With executive and company sponsorship, these groups play an important role in building internal networks for career development, advising Amazon business units, leading in service projects, participating in policy discussions, and reaching out to communities where Amazonians live and work.
6. TfL: The Steps into Work programme is a 12-month scheme which offers people with mild to moderate learning disabilities and those on the autism spectrum the chance to gain skills and work experience.
7. TfL: Disability staff network and other groups, including: Independent Disability Advisory Group (IDAG) which was set up to involve disabled people in the way that TfL shape and develop our strategy for making London more accessible for all; Valuing people – Big Day Out is a London-wide forum for people with learning difficulties meets six times a year to discuss travel and transport issues.
8. Poppy Factory: the employability team provide highly-personalised employability support based on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) method. A report commissioned by the Poppy Factory found that ex-Service personnel with a serious mental health condition are nearly three times more likely to find and stay in work if they are supported through the IPS than by other methods of employment support.

Sources of Committee's research

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London Assembly Health committee, work and health report, March 2018

House of Commons library Briefing Paper, People with disabilities in employment, November 2018

Data on self-employment were provided by GLA economics

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SMF and Trust for London, Supporting disabled people into work: a view from London, May 2018.

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London Inclusion, Submission to the Work and Pension Committee investigation on the Disability Employment gap, Jan 2017

Skills for Londoners strategy, June 2018

Mayor of London, Evidence base skills for Londoners

Some of the data evidence were given by Esi Hardy, Managing Director of Celebrating Disability to the Health Committee, 12 February 2018