

London Assembly Economy Committee – Thursday, 17 January 2019

Transcript of Item 5 – Tackling the Disability Employment Gap

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That brings us to today's main item for discussion and that is tackling the disability employment gap. I would like to welcome our guests now. We have James Taylor, Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope; Tracey Lazard, Chief Executive, Inclusion London; Jon Rees, Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London; Joanne Asphall, Head of Programmes, Central London Forward; and Diane Lightfoot, Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum.

As is normal with our meetings, we will ask some questions and we will take it in turns. I will kick off with the first question and this is to all of you, please. Despite the United Kingdom's (UK) enviable record in job creation over the past decade, the gap in the employment rate for those with a disability and those without has barely shifted. Why do you think that is? Who would like to start us off?

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): Firstly, thank you to the Committee for inviting Scope to provide evidence today. I think there are many factors causing the disability employment gap. The gap between the rates of disabled people in work and non-disabled people in work has been stuck at around 30% for over 10 years. There has been some progress but it is phenomenally slow.

At Scope we think there are a number of factors. Fundamentally, we do not think the employment market has adjusted to the needs of disabled people in London and around the UK. What this means in practice is that employers need to change their practices and change their culture, whether that is by improving recruitment policies, offering flexible working, strengthening workplace adjustments or thinking of new ways to do interviews. There is a whole range of things that could be introduced to help tackle the disability employment gap in the capital.

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Again, we welcome the opportunity to come and speak about this really important issue from Inclusion London. It is important to recognise that this is a complex structural and systemic issue and there are no quick answers or fixes. James is right, we have been stuck on this 30% gap, but for some groups of disabled people - particularly people with learning difficulties, deaf people and people with mental health issues - that gap increases to well over 50%. There is quite a lot of diversity within our very large group of disabled people. There are 1.2 million disabled people in London and 13.9 million across the country. It is important to take that holistic approach because everything joins up.

The causes of the gap are a range of barriers, some of which are historic and some of which are current. Historically it is just that experience of exclusion and discrimination, being viewed as of less value, institutionalisation and segregation, just not being part of everyday life, being shut away and all of the poorer outcomes that result from that. Particularly, segregated special education has been notoriously poor in providing a decent education for disabled kids. There is a lot of that historic stuff that goes back decades. We have done a lot in the last 40 years to advance our rights but at the moment, unfortunately, a lot of that is being dismantled.

Then you have the impact happening right now of austerity, particularly issues around welfare reform and social care that are, again, restricting and limiting disabled people. Cuts to social care packages are having an

impact. If you cannot get out of bed at the time of your choosing to get up and get to work, that is going to impact on your ability to have a job. Likewise, public transport impacts. It is a really complex issue. Homing in on employment, just to echo what James says, we do have rising rates of segregated education and there is a lot of concern about the cuts to support for disabled kids in mainstream schools. Jon is going to talk about the inaccessible work opportunities and work experience. It is really poor and limited.

There is a general lack of knowledge about rights and good practice, both from an employer's perspective and from disabled people's perspective. Most of us do not know our rights. There are even wider issues like the casualisation and intensification of the labour market, which is bad for a lot of workers but particularly bad for disabled workers. There are a lot of causes there, but we also must not forget that there are disabled people who are too ill to work, either consistently or at times in their life. We must not forget that as well.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): No. Thank you.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): I have worked largely with young people with learning difficulties. I would say most of the issues have been covered by James and Tracey but people, when they get to working age, have often missed out on the same opportunities that their non-disabled peers have had by that point. Therefore, they are on a very uneven playing field when it comes to recruitment. Employers do not understand the barriers that young people face and young people do not understand their own rights under the Equality Act 2010 and what they are allowed to ask for. It takes intensive support to get that group of people into sustainable employment and keep them there, in my experience.

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): I certainly agree with all the comments on the panel and there are a number of issues that can affect people with disabilities moving into employment. They can be quite complex. It would help to invest more time, resources and support into looking at skills that are available because sometimes if there is a disability, or if somebody has not necessarily been born with a disability and has developed a health condition later on in life, they need to be retrained. There is work we can do around the type of employment support that is available but then also working with employers as well.

While the disability gap in London is slightly healthier than the rest of the country, there are quite a few disparities in terms of looking at that disability gap across boroughs. People are affected by gender, age and also the area where they live as well. There is not necessarily one answer, I think it is multiple things, but certainly we should be looking at intervention at an earlier stage, from school right the way through to employment support, and also what happens if people's health conditions fluctuate. More agile support is important from the employment support point of view but then from employers as well. Their investment in helping people moving into employment is important but then also what happens after that.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Lovely, thank you. Sorry, Diane, most of it has been said. Is there anything else you would like to add to that?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): I am afraid so. Yes, I do agree with everybody who has already spoken. As has been alluded to, there is the pretty entrenched disability employment gap but multiple gaps within that. For people with learning disabilities the employment rate is only about 6%. It is important to recognise those multiple gaps as well as the headline figure.

I am coming from the perspective of working with employers and businesses predominantly, and in our experience a lot of the less enlightened businesses have a lack of understanding about the breadth of disability. They will tend to think about wheelchair users, certainly physical disability, and will not understand the breadth of the candidate pool that is available. Equally, because of the lack of confidence in people to ask for the support they need, declaration rates, if you like, may mean that disability is under-reported in the workplace but may also mean that people fall out of work because they are afraid of the stigma of asking their employer for the support they need. That is coupled with the fact that there is no consistent means of measuring disabled people in work. There are different definitions. Going back to the cultural piece, it was already mentioned whether people feel comfortable in talking about that in different workplace environments.

There is also a lack of understanding and awareness of some employers, certainly, of adjustments that can be made under the law, things like being able to offer a work trial legally as a reasonable adjustment to someone who might struggle in a traditional interview setting. All of these points, of course, are huge ones that we can expand on. One particular thing we find is that there is a very, very low level of awareness of redeployment as a reasonable adjustment. If somebody acquires a disability or health condition, too often they will then fall out of work rather than having a conversation with their employer about maybe changing duties, reduced duties or complete redeployment, which could mean they are able to stay in work.

Coupled to that there is a lack of awareness of Access to Work (AtW), which can be a brilliant support, but the cap is also an issue. Although the cap has been raised it is a big issue for people requiring human support, again typically people with learning disabilities who might need a job coach or support worker, or people who need communication or interpretation support. As somebody said in a recent consultation with us, you are not going to hire someone who can only talk to their colleagues three out of five days a week because that is all you can afford in terms of sign language interpretation.

The link between education and work has also been touched upon. I learnt an interesting thing preparing for this a couple of days ago, that apparently on average disabled graduates have better degrees than their non-disabled counterparts but far lower outcomes when it comes to work. They then tend to go on to either pursue further studies or fall into the welfare system at that point, but if they go into further studies it means that at the point when they come out they are very well educated but the gap between them and their peer group in terms of work experience is even bigger than it was before.

Employment support as well. Employment support programmes focus very much on the individual and, of course, that is important but employers need to be engaged much earlier on. They are too often an afterthought, really, right at the very end of the process. We also find that with the changing world of work and the changing kinds of jobs that are entry-level jobs, the support that is available via Jobcentres or job coaching programmes needs to keep pace with the skills and entry-level jobs that employers are looking for, particularly in a world of increasing automation. Many of the types of entry-level jobs that used to be there as standard are no longer there. I would echo the point about infrastructure with transport, social care, and also health in getting referrals. Sometimes people are off sick for a very long time because they are trying to get health diagnoses and for that then to be joined up with their employers.

To finish on a slightly more positive thing, I have noticed in the last maybe four, five or six months our members really starting to talk about recruitment. Before, their main interest was retention, an aging workforce and making sure that people did not fall out of their workplace. They are now saying, with record levels of employment generally, "We need to reach the broadest possible talent pool. How can we do that?" I think at this point in time there is an opportunity.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That is good to end on, good news on that little bit. Thank you. Joanne, you mentioned that London is slightly better. The next question, which I will just put out to whoever wants to answer, is: why do you think that London is doing slightly better? Any views on this?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Just a couple of guesses, really. I do not pretend to know the answer but I think we do have a slightly younger demographic and that might have an impact. Some of the advances in access and inclusion around education and so on are probably having an impact and that is showing, but again, our concern from the disabled people's rights movement and user-led organisations is that a lot of those advances are under threat at the moment.

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): Having worked on employment support programmes across the country, from all the way up north through to London, I think that a lot of credit also needs to be given to the transport system. It is easier and more accessible here compared to, say, some other areas across the country, particularly when you think about areas that are maybe more rural or where the transport system is not directly connected to large employers. You might have, for example, a city that has two or three really large employers that employ thousands of people, but they might be on an industrial estate that if you do not drive you cannot access. The connectivity in London is better and I do think that contributes to it. I do not think that is the only thing but it feels to me like --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): It is certainly not where it should be but I accept it is better than anywhere else. Any other ideas?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Joanne has alluded to the breadth of opportunity. The huge variety of businesses of all shapes, sizes and sectors in London is unparalleled and that has to provide greater opportunity. I would also hazard a guess that London is much more diverse generally speaking, much more forward-thinking and much more multicultural, and I would guess that logically that would extend to more progressive attitudes around employing a diverse candidate pool, including disabled people.

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): Just one final point from me, just to reference the Resolution Foundation report [*Setting the record straight: How record employment has changed the UK*] on employment published recently, which I think found that disabled people account for one of the largest groups moving into work over the last few years but are moving into self-employed, low-paid roles. There are an abundance of those in the gig economy and others around London, which might be one of the reasons as well.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That is helpful, thank you.

Andrew Dismore AM (Deputy Chair): You have given us a good overview of what the challenges are in people with disabilities finding work. I might try to drill down a bit into that. You get lots of different types of conditions and impairments. Some will be on-and-off conditions, OK one day, not OK the next; some will be quite severe; some will be relatively constant and not too severe. What difference do these different challenges make to trying to help people get into work?

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): It really varies from person to person. We have already heard that there are some groups - people with a learning disability or perhaps people with autism - who have far lower rates of employment than people who might be hard of hearing.

The one thing that really comes through the disabled people that Scope speak to is just not knowing how an employer is going to treat you, what that workplace is going to be like, what that culture is going to be like and how you are going to be supported or not with your condition or impairment. That is one of the biggest barriers that disabled people face.

Research we published last year found that on average, disabled people have to apply for 60% more jobs than non-disabled people and in fact only half of applications from disabled people result in any form of interview. It is far higher for non-disabled people. There is a huge barrier around attitudes and not knowing and I think some employers still do think it is a risk or it is expensive to hire a disabled person. Organisations like the Business Disability Forum are really challenging some of those perceptions.

Andrew Dismore AM (Deputy Chair): Jon, I do not know if you want to come in on that. I know when I was looking at learning disabilities some time ago the evidence we had then, when I was in Parliament, was that once somebody got a job with learning disabilities they were actually more reliable and better employees than the mainstream.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): We try not to generalise when we are talking to employers about that but yes, it is a selling point that we have noticed. We have often approached employers who have high turnover of staff and people with learning disabilities have plugged that gap and have stayed in jobs. You could say that is a really good thing and a strong business case for employing people, but you could also say that we are putting a ceiling above people and not allowing them to progress and to have aspirations to move up the career ladder. It is a double-edged sword, really. But yes, in my experience of working with young people with learning difficulties, once they are in a job that they enjoy they will stay, they will do it really well and they will be consistent and reliable.

Andrew Dismore AM (Deputy Chair): You are going to get some questions about employers later on but it seems to me that one of the key issues is reliability. If somebody gets a job and they are found to be reliable that overcomes one of the real barriers. Am I wrong about that?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Reliability is a really important characteristic for staff across all employment but from our perspective it is the lack of knowledge, lots of myths around disabled people and for disabled people about what they can and cannot ask for. There is a lot of ignorance still out there on the employers' side but also among disabled people about what is a reasonable adjustment, what they can ask for and what they can do confidently. Just having a conversation about your access needs is really hard. It is hard on a personal level, but when you are doing it with your potential employer or your new employer there is a lot riding on that. There is so much to do around enabling employers to understand good practice, share that good practice and also support disabled people to be more aware and confident. That is at the heart of it.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Can I just comment on your reliability point, which I agree with? It is about people proving themselves. We find that one of the things that employers really worry about, and they may or may not say this, is the cost of employing someone. In a recent consultation somebody said, "I may not be looking for the best candidate for the job but rather the best candidate for the job that I can afford", and that is particularly true when it comes to deaf people who need a sign language interpreter. That is a real issue.

Then across the piece for employers, they worry a lot about performance management and attendance management. When they actually ask us about that, that is great because we can say, "You can performance

manage someone with a disability in just the same way as you would someone without a disability, as long as you are sure you have removed all the barriers that are related to that disability. There is no reason why you cannot pull people up for not doing a good job if it is nothing to do with it". Equally, busting some of the myths around attendance. Somebody who has a learning disability, is a wheelchair user or is deaf is no more likely to catch flu than anybody else. But if they do not get to the point where they feel safe to ask those questions then they will still find excuses not to employ people.

Andrew Dismore AM (Deputy Chair): Just continuing on employers' positions, is that primarily a cultural thing or are there work conditions that employers may set that stop people finding work?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Again, there are lots of things within there. Culture is really, really important and that has to be set from the top. If somebody senior says, "We want to have a diverse workforce and that includes disabled people. I am going to be looking throughout the workforce and holding people to account", we see continuously that that makes a real difference in driving change. The second thing that makes a difference in driving change is practical support and the confidence of line managers, because often the people doing the hiring are not the human resources (HR) teams, they are not the senior people and they do not know what to do. They are then afraid of doing the wrong thing so they do nothing.

There are some specific things that can really help around the recruitment process. There are all sorts of ways, right through from attraction to people applying, that can inadvertently create huge barriers, whether it is looking at a job advertisement that does not reflect someone like me or says you have to be a team player when someone has autism, or there is a requirement that you have to have a driving licence. Probably the person putting the job description together did not mean to exclude people but has inadvertently. That goes all the way through to inaccessible online portals, whether that is because they are not compatible with a screen-reader or because they have algorithms that pre-sift people who have a gap in their CV, for example. There are all sorts of ways that we engage and practically support employers but they have to be receptive to changing the way they do things.

Andrew Dismore AM (Deputy Chair): You will get some questions about support later on. The last question from me is about training. London has a high-skilled economy and it may be counter-intuitive that London is better, albeit marginally, than the rest of the country. How do people with disabilities get access to training that will help them improve their job prospects and indeed career? Does anyone want to take that one?

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): In the same ways that everybody else does, but again if we look holistically at the whole picture people are coming through segregated education and therefore they are getting to a point in their life when they are ready to go to college or ready to work and they have not had the same opportunities as non-disabled peers. They are less likely to access training, specifically people with learning difficulties and further education end up on the circle of life skills courses and skills for work courses which do not really equip them for the world of work because they are not outward-facing and they are not addressing the social barriers, the barriers that are out there in society. They are given low expectations of what they can achieve. There is nothing specifically saying that it is blocking disabled people from accessing training rather than everything that has gone before, up until that point.

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): I agree with that and I also think it is similar to the steer that we would give to employers. It is about how we raise awareness of the training that is available, letting people know that they can access that, where it is available, what local services can support

them and then also how that training will link to potential career opportunities. In the same way that people with disabilities may sometimes look at the way employers recruit, they may have a look at an advert and maybe immediately dismiss it because the assessment criteria alone rule out a number of people.

I am not saying it is a simple solution but sometimes it could just be about employers and training providers talking about what different types of courses are available or, if there is a course, how that could be adapted so that it is accessible for all. I wonder sometimes with training what would be the end result for people. What would be the motivation? If somebody with disabilities is accessing training, it is the same as everybody else. You are doing it for a reason. You want to know where that might lead to. Maybe it is a particular career change or a job that you want to apply for. Linking skills and employment is quite important but then also, yes, how skills providers, adult learning or young learning talks about how particular training can be adapted and how that could link to further career opportunities as well.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): I think there is a crucial point in the last year of education. One thing we are particularly interested in is the support that happens, or not, for disabled undergraduates and it is extremely patchy. The employers who take on graduates say that the disabled people are very often ill-equipped for the world of work, what kinds of adjustments are possible and what it is like. There is something really practical there about universities and colleges at all levels equipping disabled people to be ready.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): The next section is supporting disabled people into work and the role of employment support. We have touched on it but Caroline is going to start with the questioning there.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you, Chair. First of all, it is important to think, what actually is employment support? I do not know, James, whether you would be able to give us almost a definition of employment support.

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): I can try. What is employment support? It is probably four things. It is advice and guidance on looking for the right opportunity, whether that is full-time employment, training or something else. It is support to understand how a disability, condition or impairment could impact on that individual at work and what support might be available to them. It is support on building motivation and confidence. It is also advice on how to be able to talk about disability at work and how to request the adjustments that you might need.

Caroline Russell AM: That is really interesting because I have spoken to a few people who are in work with disabilities who found that talking about reasonable adjustments was one of the most difficult things and also one of the things that seems to lead to misunderstandings with work colleagues as well, which is unhelpful sometimes in terms of feeling confident at work. That kind of advice about how you talk about the reasonable adjustments that you need, is that advice out there for people?

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): It is in some places. I can only speak from my experience but I certainly know from disabled people I speak to that there is not just a worry about being able to ask about adjustments, it is a worry about talking about your condition, talking about your impairment, talking about your disability or even identifying as disabled, and a worry about how that might be perceived by your line manager or perceived by colleagues. There is still a real worry about being bullied, being harassed or facing prejudice in some way because you have disclosed or you have talked about something. That is certainly something that needs to be challenged.

In terms of support out there to help with that, Scope run employment support services in 10 boroughs in London which provide disabled people with one-to-one tailored advice on how to handle those conversations and how to deal with those conversations. We have also published a range of materials for employers on how they can start those conversations too because it really needs to be two-way.

Caroline Russell AM: Is there advice for employers about how to handle those conversations sensitively? That is something else. People have said they have disclosed the nature of their disability and then had that inappropriately discussed in the workplace, which was mortifying and very difficult. Is there advice for employers about how to deal with this?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): The simple answer is, “Yes, tons of it”. It is just whether there is the awareness of it. We advise employers to ask if someone needs an adjustment at every stage rather than to ask if they have a disability or health condition necessarily, and obviously to agree with that employee how much they are comfortable with sharing or not with the wider team. To go back to your point about awkwardness, if someone says that they are experiencing a period of mental ill health and therefore they are going to be working shorter hours or reduced duties or something, it is then agreeing with them what they are comfortable with sharing with the wider team to prevent any kind of resentment or, “How come they don’t have to do that anymore?” Obviously, that is a very sensitive thing and it requires skill and trust between the manager and the employee to be able to do that.

Some of the organisations that do it well are the ones that mainstream adjustments, if you like. Rather than having to say, “Can I work different hours because I find it difficult with my mobility issues travelling at rush hour?” or equally, “I experience acute anxiety at rush hour”, or, “I have a caring responsibility”, if you just offer flexible working then nobody has to put themselves through saying why they need it. We are starting to see organisations going beyond that and saying, “We will offer productivity tools so that you do not have to have a formal diagnosis of dyslexia, say, to get speech-detect software. If it will help you do your job more effectively, we will let you have it”.

Obviously, some organisations can fund that more easily than others and the one I am thinking of, who has gone a long way on this but it is a good example, is Barclay’s. Up to a certain point they let employees self-serve for adjustments for bits of kit, whether it is technology or chairs. We had an interesting discussion about whether they were worried that would lead to abuse of the system and then we thought, “Unless you decide you want to buy all your family speech-detect software for Christmas, why on Earth would you?” It is those organisations that are trusting their employees to do the right thing and to ask for the support they need that are getting the benefits.

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): It is important, when we look at employment support, to do it from both ends. It is that package of support for disabled people but it is also that support for employers. One of the things that we emphasise in the work that we do is also the importance of peer support. There are very few opportunities for disabled people to come together to share their experiences, share knowledge and share tips, and that is a really important part of increasing knowledge and confidence and just being able to navigate that kind of journey.

Caroline Russell AM: That kind of peer support, are you imagining that within a workplace? It could be people within one workplace, I suppose, for a bigger organisation, but for people working in smaller organisations, where might they get that peer support?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Peer support is an amazing resource whatever the situation. We use it within the support that we provide to disabled people who are looking for work. I know we are going to get on to talking about, “What does a really good 21st-century employer look like?” and it is those employers who will set up opportunities for disabled staff to meet together, have a disabled staff network and genuinely work with that network, bringing them in to review policy and just having them at the heart of the organisation. Peer support is crucial.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): Yes. It works best, I think, when I have worked with supported internships, which give people a long time to learn a role with support from a disabled persons organisation, and then get jobs within those organisations and go on to mentor the next disabled person coming through. That works really well because they have faced the barriers, they have challenged them and they have found out what works for them, and they are better prepared to advise the people coming through. If we can replicate that sort of model I think that is part of the answer.

Caroline Russell AM: We have looked at the peer support but is there any other kind of support that disabled people need to sustain them in work and to progress in their work?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): The progression piece is really important. There is, as I am sure you know, a consistent gap between the career development of disabled people and non-disabled peers. We are starting to run some career coaching and career development courses specifically for disabled people which include discussions with people who have been trainers in this space for a long time and the peer support in those sessions is really helpful, particularly for people who do not have a large enough organisation to have the inhouse network that Tracey talks about. They are amazingly effective, are they not? It was the blend of the personal as well as professional coaching, overcoming self-limiting beliefs in a lot of cases and questioning some things around your family expectations, being over-protective, all those sorts of things, which are affecting career development.

The other thing that really stuck with me that one of the trainers talks about, and this is a trainer who himself is a wheelchair user, is he said, “You need to be the expert in your own condition, to be able to go and talk to your line manager and not expect them to be an expert in what you are doing but in a very matter-of-fact, assertive way, say, ‘This is the condition I have, these are the adjustments I need, it will enable me to be productive’, and get that conversation out there”. This same trainer also makes the point on that course that one of the reasons that employers perceive disabled employees as a problem is that too often they only find out that someone has a disability when something is not working or someone is in crisis. If you can open that conversation up-front it can make a big difference in the support that you get and then being able to progress.

Caroline Russell AM: In terms of people who have a lifelong disability, are there interventions that need to happen earlier than they maybe are happening at the moment that might help those people to get into employment?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): It is back to the point that we need to look at disability equality in a holistic way. That is everything from transport to housing to social care to education to employment to training to being able to participate and get out and about in London. Rather than a linear thing about starting interventions earlier, we need to be embedding disability equality across all areas of life and work. I know that is huge but we need to be tackling it in each area and there is great work that has been done over the last few decades on that.

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): I wonder as well whether it is worth looking at the length of time that employment support is available. Employment support for people with disabilities – well, for all people, particularly if you are long-term unemployed but particularly for people with disabilities – tends to be focused at the front end of the journey, looking at how they are accessing services, what skills are available and what training might be needed. Then for various reasons, either where there are limitations on organisations that are providing the resource or limitations on funding, that support is usually only available for a period of time and that period of time can be anything from a few weeks to maybe a maximum of six months for the odd organisation, or if you are lucky maybe they can do it for 12, but all of that support is then pulled away.

There is work we can do with employers, but it feels like it is worth exploring if there is something as well we can do around extending how long that support is available. If we are working on how people can be empowered to have those conversations and receive coaching, can that carry on for longer, for two, three or however many years? It feels like there is something there that we could look at in terms of how agile employment support is now and talking about it through the entire journey. There are lots of people in local services and support helping here but once people are in work it slowly moves away, and I think that can be quite difficult.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): There is something that we are looking at. We are piloting a scheme this year to kind of address that need because we have noticed that that is the biggest unmet need. There are lots of pre-employment support programmes and lots of supported internships which do really good work and have high outcomes to get people into work, but that support is not sustainable. Three months into that job the support starts to tail off and AtW will only pay for six months' job coaching for somebody, so if changes happen in the workplace further down or somebody experiences changes in their life they have to go back to mainstream employment support, which is proven not to work. That social model-led support delivered by disabled people is just not sustainably funded at the moment. We are looking at how we can plug that gap and I think that is crucial because many people I have worked with have nowhere to go further down the line. They are just not supported through that entire journey, as Joanne has said.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): In terms of the timing of it, we know that the transition at 14-plus is a key time whether you have a disability or not. Starting with the expectations of work and career development at that stage is really important. There is even just the fact that too many young people with a disability will not have the opportunity for work experience and may not have had casual work, a Saturday job or those sorts of things which make a real difference in understanding what work is like.

The other bit of feedback we get from employers on a project we are working on is making sure that the training programmes and the skills are rooted in the workplace rather than in education, and that the skills of those trainers keep abreast of how the world of work is changing, the role of technology and all those sorts of things so that it is the right skills for the right jobs.

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Just to add, AtW is a vitally important component in this. We have just produced a report with disabled people on their experiences of Access to Work and we have a whole report just on the recommendations for improvement because at an individual level Access to Work is becoming an increasingly poor experience. There is a huge downward pressure on people to reduce their packages, accept inappropriate support and have caps on packages. There are still unacceptable

waits before you get any support just in the those first few weeks in a job. Access to Work really works when it works and we need more investment in that model of support as well.

We would like to see it extended so that employers can access Access to Work as well. At the moment it is via disabled people but we want to encourage employers to identify the barriers that are operating in their workplace and be able to seek advice and possibly support to address them, not wait for a wheelchair user to be employed and then realise that they have to change some physical structure.

Caroline Russell AM: Is there an employers' good practice mark or something that employers can aspire to in terms of being a good employer for disabled people?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): I understand from the briefing that there is a question around the Disability Confident scheme. In principle we think something like that is important but frankly when you look at the reality of that scheme it feels a bit like window dressing. You just self-assess, I think, until you get to stage 3 of this Disability Confident scheme and there has just been a recent assessment that showed that for all of the employers signed up, it equated to less than each employer employing one disabled people. I think what we are seeing is a bit of a tokenistic thing where employers sign up to this scheme and do not really need to do anything more. That needs teeth and it needs to be resourced, and there is a wider question about disabled people's rights as workers and employers' duties. We need to have a culture of more actively embracing that as well.

Fiona Twycross AM: It was on this area of the kinds of support disabled people needed when looking for a job. We looked at this to a certain extent with a report [*A Helping Hand*] we did a few years ago on how the voluntary sector could help people back into employment and what we identified was that obviously there are people who are relatively easy for some of the work programmes to get into work and that left people behind who maybe needed a bit more intensive support. How easy is it? Is there a postcode lottery across London? If somebody lives in one borough are they more likely to get the type of support they need at that much more bespoke level, where they would get very individual care and the type of ongoing care that you have described?

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): Yes, definitely. There are London boroughs that scored much higher on disability employment than others and that can only be the level of support that is available in that borough. It could come down to employers, particularly large employers, in the boroughs, but yes, definitely. In the boroughs where there are deaf and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) delivering social model-led employment support, you are going to have much higher rates. They are not looking to cream off the least disabled people because they are easier to get into work to get results and keep the funding coming in. It is about supporting people individually according to the needs that they have.

Fiona Twycross AM: In that report I cannot remember exactly but I think we looked at the funding model and the fact that the 'entirely by results' model was discriminating against people.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): Yes.

Fiona Twycross AM: We have looked at that on a number of occasions with some of the pieces of work we have done, particularly on this Committee, around the approach people get to payment by results. Sometimes, understandably, people want to demonstrate that there is value for money, but it does then discriminate against people who need that more intensive support. It would be quite useful to explore that a bit further.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): There is also an issue around the skills of work coaches within Jobcentre Plus, which are very variable. They are expected to work with a very wide-ranging client group and inevitably some of them are better at supporting disabled people than others.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: My question is to Diane and it follows on from something Joanne has just said, that vital point. It does not make sense to me that you have that package of support for someone with a disability, when that disability is not going to go away, and you limit it to a time period rather than it being organic, if you like, because things change, and learning is by repetition and all sorts of stuff. Diane, from your Business Disability Forum, is that part of something that should be embraced by employers, knowing that it cannot be just a one-off package of help and any training that a disabled person may need?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): I am sorry, could you repeat the question? I am not quite -- what is the question?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Joanne was saying that some of the packages that are available are time-limited.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Work support? Do you mean support into work? Right, yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes, and I am just saying that really does not make sense given that you have someone with a disability that is not going to go away and in fact may change. Surely employers have to commit to ongoing support packages?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): I think yes. We might be talking about slightly different things, potentially. I think Joanne was talking about pre-employment support. For pre-employment support there definitely needs to not be such a time limit.

For example, Business Disability Forum runs a project in Camden called Camden Ability which is all about matching disabled jobseekers to employers. We support the employers, and Cross River Partnership in north London support the disabled candidates. What we have found and what the employers have found pretty much across the piece is that the people referred to the programme are a lot further from the job market than we or the employers would have expected. For example, people who have never worked before and need to understand how to dress to go to work, the fact that you have to go every day, about time-keeping, booking annual leave and all sorts of things that we take for granted.

I hope I am not putting words into Joanne's mouth but I think it was more about recognising that people may need more support up-front rather than just a quick, "What are your skills? How are they transferable? Who is the right employer?" It may need to be a bit more holistic than that.

Once you get to employers, the main kinds of packages of support are around AtW, which Tracey was talking about, which will fund adjustments and adaptations in the workplace. They will also fund, up to a point, things like transport to work and within work. The issue is that AtW is capped for everyone and it is also means-tested so that depending on the size of the employer you pay more or less.

It is generally very reasonable to say that employers, if they value their employee, should be prepared to pick up the tab and support that employee. The reality is that sometimes the gap in the funding -- for example, if you look at the cap versus the cost for sign language communication for someone who is a British Sign Language speaker as their first language, you could be looking at a gap of £30,000 per person per year. Then,

although morally you would say to employer, “This is a good person, you want to keep them”, actually, practically, £30,000 is a lot of money and they may struggle with that.

There is also an added issue around the cash flow in that generally speaking the employer has to pay for the adjustment upfront and it can take a long time for the funding then to come through from AtW, even if it does cover the whole cost. Even though an employer may want to do that, the practicalities may be impossible.

Caroline Russell AM: We are moving on to look a bit at the benefit system, things like statutory sick pay, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and the ways in which those parts of the benefit system are or are not supporting disabled people into work.

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): The benefit system is hugely important. It is a social security and we have serious concerns about the impact of welfare reform on disabled people in terms of the perverse consequences of moving people further away from employment, which is what research is showing on issues around conditionality and sanctions, but also just that more and more disabled people are experiencing deeper and more persistent poverty. You have the cuts in benefits. The new level of benefit for ESA for new claimants is a 30% cut on the previous.

Caroline Russell AM: Thirty?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Thirty. It is a cut of something like £28 a week. That is huge and significant. In the past it was slightly higher than Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) because it recognised that disabled people are out of the job market for longer than non-disabled people. It is very different to be out of a job and poor for six months compared to two years or three years, when you cannot renew that mobile phone, you cannot buy new shoes, that kind of stuff.

There are huge issues around increasing poverty and there is, we would say, irrefutable evidence now that disabled people are being disproportionately affected by welfare reform. You look at the latest report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission [*The Cumulative Impact of Health and Welfare Reforms*] that identified disabled people among two other groups, the Bangladeshi community and single parents, as those who have been the hardest-hit by welfare reform. You have the United Nations (UN) disability committee, which did its periodic review of the UK and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, describing welfare reform particularly as “a human catastrophe”. This is serious business.

We have increasing poverty but we also have a process that is hostile. I do not think you can describe it in any other way. There are all of the problems with the Work Capability Assessment, the PIP assessment; we have all read the horror stories of somebody unqualified asking about somebody with Down syndrome, “When are they going to get better? How long will this last for?” They are ongoing and now we have the latest challenge, which is Universal Credit. We know that 750,000 disabled people are going to be worse off under Universal Credit. The process is extremely difficult and inaccessible for many disabled people. It is an online process. It has never been equality impact assessed. Nobody has thought about, “Is this process accessible to people who do not use the internet?”

Then you have the really big issue of conditionality and sanctions. The Work and Pensions Select Committee described it as “pointlessly cruel”. There is no evidence to say that the threat of withdrawing access to basic income actually does incentivise a disabled person who cannot get a job because they are either too ill or because of the barriers. That is not going to incentivise somebody to go out and get a job that is not available to them. On conditionality and sanctions, we know that you are nine times more likely to be sanctioned under

Universal Credit than the legacy benefits. It is a huge issue and it is making people ill. Half of ESA claimants have mental health issues and the threats of conditionality, making people do some inappropriate activity to show they are looking for work or saying, "You are too qualified, you have to stop talking about the fact that you have a degree", and the threat of sanctions, are actually making people's mental health worse.

We have huge concerns about the role of benefits at the moment or the changes to benefit. It is a critical social security measure for disabled people who are impacted by all the barriers that we have been talking about.

Caroline Russell AM: Certainly, I am a Councillor and my Councillor's surgery normally takes an hour. Just recently it has usually been two hours, there are so many of these benefits issues that are coming through. That absolutely echoes what you are saying.

Fiona Twycross AM: I think Tracey has managed to cover most of the questions that I was going to ask about this. One of the things I was wondering, I have been raising issues around Universal Credit, sanctions and delays and things like that with the Mayor and asking him to then raise it with the Government. Do we have a model of what we know works from other countries? One of the issues is that there is so much evidence of what the problems are with the system currently. It would be quite helpful for us to have a model of what we know works from somewhere else or what we know has worked in the past to argue alongside the evidence for what is going wrong with the system currently. I have had a conversation with someone who had severe mental health issues because he had to wait a year to get any money on PIP and he had become disabled. The system is broken but what should we be arguing for to replace it?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): That is a massive question. Within the disabled people's rights movement, we are thinking about, "What would an assessment process look like that comes from a social model of disability?" At the moment we have a crude, medicalised functionality thing that is not done properly and is not done with the appropriate skills, but what we really need to do is have an assessment process that looks at the barriers, that includes the barriers that somebody faces. It is not simply that I cannot use my left arm, it is not about how many bags of potatoes I can pick up or not; it is about me, the interaction in society and the particular barriers that I might face. It is something that we need to work on.

There are some principles about recognising that for groups of people who are excluded, actively excluded, and are actively still experiencing discrimination and prejudice, and who therefore are excluded more often from the job market, we have to recognise that and support them as well as tackle those barriers. We know and Scope has done work on the additional costs of having an impairment, whether that is heating or washing, and we have to recognise that. Those are principles that have to be personalised. It has to recognise the additional costs of impairment and the consequences of being excluded often from the job market.

Fiona Twycross AM: Do we see a situation in which people are so scared of what is going to happen to them if they get into the system that they avoid claiming benefits they are entitled to because they do not want to go through processes that they do not feel would be sympathetic to them? Is that an issue?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): That is massive, and the Government could just stop that in terms of Universal Credit by not requiring that everybody reapplies. They could be passported over. Just the act of trying to make that application is going to be too much for considerable numbers of people. We are seeing people, disabled people, drop out of social services because now the charges for social care are so high that they simply cannot afford them. That kind of drop out from our social security system is increasing.

Fiona Twycross AM: Thank you. I will move on to the next area of questioning if I may. What has changed in the way agencies are working to support disabled Londoners since the devolution of the Work and Health Programme?

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): Yes. It is very early days in devolution for London, and then Greater Manchester are running with a devolved Work and Health Programme as well. For London we started delivering the Work and Health Programme in March [2018]. It is very early days but there is an argument that is worth exploring that looks at whether, when services are delivered locally, they are more effective. If we are looking at the differences across boroughs in London and also the differences for people with disabilities, there are really interesting points about the impact of people on benefits in terms of assessment.

One thing I wanted to add as well is that part of the things we are seeing on the programme is that people are being reassessed and moved on to a different type of benefit, whether that is Universal Credit or JSA. That then sometimes challenges the definition of the people who are then accessing employment support. If we are defining people accessing employment support by the type of benefit that they are on, we are finding that people are being reassessed who are on a disability benefit and then moved on to Universal Credit or JSA, and then they are not necessarily entitled to all of the support that is available or they are not picked up by the right organisation.

It is very early days but we are seeing some interesting cases where people are already known to local authority services - for example, if they are heavy users of local authority services for a number of different reasons, whether that is debt advice, housing, or support with disability - because the funding is devolved and London is split into four sub-regions for the devolved Work and Health Programme. Because they are already known to local services and local authority teams they are able to then work with organisations that are delivering the employment support, because we have designed and commissioned the type of programme that we would like to see and the type of support that we would like people to receive. Tailoring that is a good start. Delivering employment support for people with disabilities does not necessarily work at scale, different cities have different experiences and issues and that should be taken into account.

Also, with organisations or people assessing those who are claiming benefits, some thought should be given to the type of assessment that is available, the type of questions that are being asked and the type of training that is given to the organisations, advisers and people who are conducting the assessments. There are a couple of things there.

If I could add a third thing, one of the things that will be really interesting is that running the devolved Work and Health Programme gives us an opportunity to see what devolution looks like compared to national provision or national programmes. The way we evaluate programmes is really important, how we assess what is working well and the things that we would like to change, but then also how we share that. That can be quite difficult when you have multiple agencies but it feels like there is more we could do in that space as well.

Fiona Twycross AM: You mentioned the four sub-regions and I understand that the four sub-regions receive funding worth up to £135 million, which is match-funded by the European Union (EU) through the European Social Fund. Is there a commitment to make sure the European Social Fund money does not dissipate? Are we confident that is going to be replaced post-Brexit?

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): There are conversations that are happening in terms of what that funding will look like post-Brexit. We have a commitment for five years and what happens after that has not been defined yet, but there are certainly quite a lot of conversations that are happening around that. It picks up on the point I was making earlier. Whether it is this programme or others, when we are looking at employment support it is available for a defined period of time. There is a pot of money that organisations will bid for that does help people, but then it finishes, so there is only so much that we can do. Then it is what happens after that. There is more focus on it at the moment because of Brexit and because of the European Social Fund, but it is a broader question that we should ask ourselves anyway.

Fiona Twycross AM: Before I hand on to my colleague, Shaun, one of the issues that has come up previously in other investigations we have done is the relatively short-term funding. When you go on to the next pot of funding, sometimes people are looking for something novel rather than people saying, "This is tried and tested, we need to continue this programme". Is there a risk that, because the funding is always in relatively short-term pots, the next lot of funding will always be looking for something new when we probably know what works and we just need to find a way of finding sustainable funding over a longer period of time? Is that a reasonable point? James, you are nodding.

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): I totally think it is, yes. Employment support programmes and systems have been in existence for 40 or 50 years in some form or another and there is lots of learning there - the issue that you have quite rightly raised - that is not being shared. Programmes like Work and Health and other programmes could be better evaluated and learnings from those evaluations could be better applied to make the programmes better and more effective. There is a real opportunity to involve disabled people more - the people who are using the programmes and benefitting from them - in the design and delivery of them. That just comes back to what we have been hearing about the assessment process, that it has been designed primarily by people up in Whitehall and Westminster, not by the people who are going through the process in the first place. What we increasingly hear from disabled people is that there is a real lack of trust. They do not trust the system. They do not trust the Jobcentre. How do you build that trust? You need to engage with them.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): I was just going to add that I was at a presentation about the Work and Health Programme in one area of London. Devolution is a good idea, localising it is a good idea, but at this meeting the subcontractor was asking deaf and DPOs to refer to the service and to take referrals from a service with no financial reimbursement for that at all. It was just, "We are here, get involved, help us out", but they were not getting any support to deliver that. That is not sustainable or viable really.

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): We do know what works but one of the things that has not been tested enough is grassroots community organisations being involved, particularly DPOs because of all the peer support and the expertise of lived experience. In that food chain where the money goes down, DPOs are not even bid candy. We are often not even on the radar. There is that feeling that at the grassroots level, where you have that local knowledge about who the local employers are, who your local community of disabled people are, a lot of those organisations do not get a look-in either. It is a food chain that does not reach to where it should be reaching.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. The next section is taken by Assembly Member Bailey and it is working with employers.

Shaun Bailey AM: Diane, I will start with you and if anybody else wants to chip in. I want to concentrate initially on, in your experience, what support for employers works best to help employers change their culture and start to think about how they can support disabled people into employment in their own business.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): That is also a very big question. It is important to have a source of support and advice, almost like a safety net. Some of our members say, "We just like knowing you are there in the background if there is an issue". That then gives them the confidence to employ someone because they know that there is somewhere they can go to ask for support. That is very important. There is a huge thing around awareness right across the piece of some of the practical things that employers can do. That is a process of education and awareness and there is not a particularly quick fix. It goes right from understanding the breadth of disability, not thinking that it is just - as I said at the beginning - physical disability or wheelchair users, but there is this huge breadth.

Then there is understanding the fact that there is this untapped talent pool. I know we are going to go on to the section about how the Mayor can help, but it is amplifying those messages that this is a talent pool that you are missing out on. The caveat in my next statement is you should not need a business case to employ disabled people any more than you should need a business case to support women, for example, but we also know that lots of employers are worried about productivity. Studies have shown that diverse teams right across the piece are more productive and have better results for the bottom line. Awareness of the fact that this is not just about doing people a favour, it is good for your business as well, is a really, really important starting point.

Once the hearts and minds are changed, and the importance of culture cannot be underestimated, you still then need that practical support. I talked before about inadvertent barriers. You could have somebody who thinks, "I really want to employ disabled people", but does not realise that something they are putting in a job description, a question they are asking at an interview or minimum entry criteria is a huge barrier. It is a real exercise about questioning what you are asking for because - I often say this to people - we have all been there when someone in our team has resigned and we think, "I cannot afford a vacancy there, I have to get it filled as soon as possible". The temptation is usually to get out the old job description and advert and put it out again but you can take that time to say, "Do I really need A-levels? Do I really need a degree?", question whether the job could be done differently and focus on the outcomes. That is the point where there could be a real opportunity to change the whole pathway, which means that a disabled candidate would have a much better chance of getting the job.

Then there is support throughout the whole phase of the employment process. AtW has been touched upon. AtW has many flaws, as Tracey [Lazard] rightly points out, but equally when it is done well it can be transformational, yet so many employers I talk to have never heard of it. The Department for Work and Pensions itself refers to it as its best-kept secret. There is a load that needs improving but that can be transformational in whether somebody can have a job or not. There is a huge amount that needs to be done in terms of awareness and changing attitudes and understanding.

Shaun Bailey AM: Can you give me an example of any employer-led programme initiative or practice that you have come across that could be scaled or that others could be made aware of, to make other employers see that it is possible?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): There are lots of different things that collectively are good at making people think differently. As some specific examples, a couple of our members run apprenticeship schemes particularly for people with learning disabilities.

One that particularly springs to mind - I will mention both - is National Grid. They have a programme of taking on people with learning disabilities and their members of staff then train them in their own roles. They have found that to be a very positive experience. People are then moving on to paid employment, those young people with a learning disability, but the knock-on benefit has also been, in a workforce where typically people have been in post a very long time and may have become less engaged, they have then re-engaged with their own job and become more motivated just through the process of showing someone else how to do it, which is interesting.

Another example of good practice around learning disability, completely different, is Manchester Metropolitan University. They run a year-long internship programme for young people aged 17 to 24 with a learning disability. They get to try different jobs within the university. It is a big campus site so there is everything from catering to facilities to post, you name it really, which has again been very positive in terms of transitions.

Then both Microsoft and the Civil Service run programmes that are deliberately targeting people with autism and using different processes to attract people. Microsoft was interesting in that lots of technology companies recognise they need those skills. They found that 50% of the people that came through that programme had previously applied to Microsoft but been unsuccessful at some point of the process because of various barriers that were in there to do with communications or to do with assessment methods. Those are the sorts of things that could be shared.

Then a softer thing to finish on, really. Barclays started this but the Lord Mayor and the City of London have taken it on. It is a programme, *This is Me*, which is about encouraging people to share disabilities or mental health conditions as part of who they are rather than the sole defining feature, in terms of changing the culture and increasing the visibility of people who just happen to have a disability alongside having whatever they do in their working life. It is great for getting people feeling more comfortable about talking about it in the workplace but also serving as role models for young people as well.

Shaun Bailey AM: That is very interesting. It is a strong point you made about your disability or your mental health issues being a part of who you are, not all of who you are. As someone who has worked with young people, you quickly find that is all people focus on and then people take it on and that is how they define themselves. That is interesting.

I just want to move on to small business. Most employment in London is provided by small business and I wonder what role small businesses have in helping disabled unemployment. Also, is there anything specific that organisations like all the organisations you work for can do to help small businesses? Because straight away a small business will say, "We do not have the capacity to take someone on". Is there some way we can help with that culture?

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): Often small businesses do not know what they can and cannot do. There is a fear factor because they do not have the HR structure to advise them on how to employ, how to make adjustments, what they can and cannot do and what positive action they can take. Guidance for small businesses and what positive action they can take for disabled employees would be really good because often they are the best employers for disabled people because they are more flexible, more understanding and more personable. So, yes, guidance.

Shaun Bailey AM: Earlier on you talked about businesses - this is how I picked it up - feeling safe to ask the questions, to understand. Is that more of a thing for small businesses, to take into account what Jon just said about not having this great big HR structure and probably never confronting the issue before?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): It probably varies from organisation to organisation. In organisations of any size, if someone has a personal experience of disability, either themselves directly or a family member, then they are likely to be much more confident and predisposed and that can happen in an organisation of any size. What Jon says around infrastructure is very true for the big organisations; I equally think that flexibility for the smaller ones is very true. Before I joined this organisation I worked for another organisation that worked directly with people with learning disabilities and it was generally the smaller employers that could say, "Yes, OK, we will take someone on a placement next Monday", and did not have to do all the clearance and go through the HR machine and, "No, sorry, everyone has to go through this check". There is an opportunity there.

Our issue, as an organisation that exists to support businesses, is how we reach them. We would really like to be able to engage with small and medium-sized enterprises and provide support and advice and guidance because a lot of this stuff is not very difficult, a lot of it is very common-sense, straightforward and about having confidence to have a conversation and then put practical actions in. Just the awareness of that is something that stops smaller employers from engaging, probably.

Shaun Bailey AM: Just to move on, maybe directed to Jon and Tracey but please feel free to chip in, what support do organisations like yours provide to businesses? My focus now in the context of this conversation becomes small businesses, but what advice to you provide and what support? What else would you like to be able to do, cost being no issue?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Absolutely. Just to pick up on the point about culture and cultural drivers, there is something critical about pushing that agenda of transparency. We saw the impact of gender pay reporting and how people had kept that hidden. Change did happen and obviously there is a whole challenge about maintaining that.

It is partly about modelling what a really good 21st-century employer, whether it is small or big, looks like. There is that expectation that what you used to be able to keep hidden in terms of lack of diversity, is not going to be the case. That is a bit of a stick as well as all the carrots. We want to be pushing for a working environment where there is an expectation from the Chief Executive Officer down that they will be asked about their diversity. That might also help the likes of us and the Business Disability Forum reach businesses because they are coming to us and they have more motivation to come to us. At the moment, to be frank, those motivations are pretty weak. We need to strengthen that whole series of carrots and sticks to get this further up the priority.

In terms of what DPOs can offer, DPOs do huge amounts of work locally to raise awareness about the needs of the local disabled community but also what the barriers are. They might work with local business about how you make your shop front accessible or how you produce your menu in different formats. A lot of DPOs provide disability equality training. We do. We are doing some for Transport for London, which is fantastic. There is that lived experience and that expertise that can change things through training and through facilitating conversations. A big function of local community DPOs is just facilitating those links between decision-makers, service providers and disabled people, getting everybody in the same room. It does not happen, you have to make that happen. There is a lot of that facilitation, communication and raising awareness, as well as often quite bespoke consultancy around audits, auditing your premises, your

communication systems, and doing training. There is a hell of a lot we can do if we are facilitated to do it and supported.

Fiona Twycross AM: It was just on the point that was raised around the pay gap and diversity. There was part of a question earlier that I was not sure we had covered effectively and it felt like a good point to bring it back. It is about progression. Once people have made it into a job, they have a job they feel comfortable in and they have an organisation that is supportive potentially, it might be difficult to then move on to the next step or move up and across to a different organisation. How hard is it for disabled people to get support both from employers but also more generally, or the confidence to progress, and how much of a barrier is that to the pay gap for people working with disabilities?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): I do not have an answer for people moving to different organisations but for people moving within organisations, particularly larger ones, one of the things that works really well is where people are entitled to passport their adjustments. One of the things that means people often self-select out of going for a promotion is that they cannot face either going through the process of having to ask for the adjustments and support they need, whatever kind they are, or they are just worried that they could get the job but then not get what they need and not be able to do it. That is a very practical thing that can make a big difference.

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Benefits come in there and that fear of losing benefits as well but, yes, all of those issues around confidence and around the lack of support. The idea of going back to AtW and trying to renegotiate a package that might require different support is a hellish prospect for lots of disabled people. AtW is a wonderful thing but how it is operated can be a hugely disempowering process.

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): It goes back to the longer-term support. People that I have supported into work, two years later might want to look for another job, progress or use some skills they are not currently using, and most of those times we have not had the capacity to offer that support that they need. AtW is a minefield, particularly for people with learning difficulties, and so they do need some additional support. There is no funded service to offer that, to arrange and organise that support, to help with their applications and so on, so people tend to stay in jobs that they are unhappy in because it is a job. They fear not getting the support, falling out or not being able to cope without the new employer understanding the barriers that they are facing and the adjustments they need.

Fiona Twycross AM: It is a gap in support, potentially.

Shaun Bailey AM: How much support do disabled entrepreneurs get? Is there any support? Is there anything specific or do they just have the same challenge that everybody else has? Is there something additional that they could be supported in that is not being looked at?

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): There is very little. Especially on AtW side and people who are self-employed, I know that is a real issue. Scope have partnered with an organisation called Unlimited to tackle this. We now fund disabled entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs who want to get more disabled people either into their work or by providing training to employers. Over the next three years we are going to be providing 24 entrepreneurs with up to £10,000 per year and 50 entrepreneurs with up to £1,000 per year to help us tackle the disability employment gap. But from a disabled entrepreneur's point of view, my understanding or my experience of speaking to some people is that there is not that much information or support out there.

Shaun Bailey AM: Maybe I will direct it to Diane again. The Government's Disability Confident scheme, how well does it work?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Tracey covered it quite eloquently earlier, I felt. Disability Confident, in theory at least, has a good idea in terms of raising the visibility of disability. It certainly has done that among our membership and it has become something that quite a lot of organisations we work with think they need to have. There are three levels of it, as I am sure you are aware, and the third level has to be accredited. We do some of the accreditations. That said, it is very thin. You could achieve certainly level 2, if not level 3, without having ever employed a disabled person because you just have to have the policies and processes to do that. We see it as potentially a step in the right direction but it needs to go an awful lot further.

Shaun Bailey AM: It is a very small start?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): It is a very small step. Disability Confident committed is the first step and it is a badge, it is putting your hands up and saying, "OK, we want to get better at this", but that is all it is. There are no resources - well maybe one or perhaps two - that sit behind Disability Confident, so organisations that want to get better at this then need to come to organisations like mine or Tracey or James's to get practical support. "All right, well, we have said we want to get better at this. What does this look like?"

We have our own accreditation called the Disability Standard, which goes a long way beyond Disability Confident. That said, it would be too much of a leap for someone who has never thought about it. There is definitely a need for something that is entry-level but there needs to be a stronger progression, a stronger evidence base, and there has to be some evidence base around having employed disabled people. At least having met someone with a disability would be a start.

Shaun Bailey AM: But there is some value there?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): There is some value but it needs to be a lot stronger.

Shaun Bailey AM: You could see improvements being made?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Yes.

Shaun Bailey AM: To everybody, what incentives could be offered to firms to encourage them to recruit and retain disabled staff, to really believe, to be involved and to want to make that happen?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): As I said, there are those modelling what a good employer should be doing. I know the Mayor is doing some work around the Good Work Standard and that expectation and transparency are really important. Reporting is vital. I am undecided still about things like tax breaks and whether you would reduce your employer National Insurance contribution. I am not sure how that would work. Often you can get into quite cynical uses of these kinds of incentives. Again, you might find a couple of disabled people shoved in the photocopier room and that is their quota for that incentive done. I am not sure about that.

I do think it is about modelling what a really good employer in this century should look like, and that is about diversity, it is personalisation, it is about the flexibility to meet everybody's reasonable adjustments and a transparent culture that recognises that there is a talent pool - in this case disabled people - that is not being tapped and you are going to perform much better if you reflect the communities that you are serving.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Equally we sometimes get asked about positive action and we say that, "If you have identified that you have a group of people, whether it is people with a learning disability or whatever, who are falling through your practices, then absolutely fine, have positive action around that". Targets are much more problematic. I am slightly undecided on targets. Instinctively we always say that quotas have never worked. People used to pay the fine rather than having quotas and, as Tracey says, you end up with people stuck in the post room by the photocopier because it is just about ticking a box rather than changing mindsets and driving behaviours.

That said, given how little the disability employment gap has changed, maybe we do need to change things. I guess what I would say around targets is that where they do work is where they are internally set. Again, this is talking about some of the converted. We do quite a lot of work with the Civil Service and also with the BBC, for example. They have looked at the diversity in their workforces around disability and said, "Firstly, we instinctively think the numbers of people who are telling us they have a disability is lower than the number, so we want to change the culture so we have a better idea of who is there". That is fundamental to the reporting piece, people feeling they can tell you so that you get an accurate picture at any point in time that you can then build on.

The second is setting targets internally where people buy in to them. The Civil Service has a new Diverse Leadership Task Force, which is focused on increasing the number of disabled and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people at senior levels of the Civil Service, and each of the departments within the Civil Service - this is in the public domain - has been tasked with coming up with their own targets, which then have been scrutinised by the committee. Because they have set them themselves and it is targets for improvement, they own them. That then begins to drive change in practice. Of course only time will tell whether they work but that is a lot more positive than externally-imposed targets.

Shaun Bailey AM: In that last example you gave, is there any example of the committee challenging the target, a very soft target or a very low ambition? It would seem like the committee would challenge it but does that really happen? If your organisation comes back to you and says, "We only want to do a little bit of this", who is going to rock that boat?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): This goes back to the point around senior leadership. In this case, the Task Force is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Civil Service. I cannot remember specifics because there was this huge great big graph with lots and lots of different figures on it, but going through it various people were saying, "That is higher than I would expect", "Why is that one so low?", "That seems a bit unambitious", or, "Given the current trajectory, where they got that figure from, what they are basing it on?" There was a level of scrutiny. It is relatively early days. The programme itself, the Task Force, was set up a year ago, so it is early days, but just having that culture of looking at it and examining it, challenging it, has to be a step in the right direction.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Fine, thank you. The last section is on the role of the Mayor and Jennette is going to be asking questions.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Can I just start by saying thank you so much for what you have been telling us today? Always we are looking to hear what you would like from the Mayor so it would be nice if you could all respond to this question. In terms of support, either the support you already receive or would like to receive, can you just make a brief comment, starting with you, Diane?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Funding is always nice. More seriously, the Mayor has a huge role to play in what we talked about around the infrastructure around work, particularly transport. We were very pleased that the City of London did their own consultation on transport. We know, as we have talked about, that it is a huge enabler - or not - for people working.

Equally, things like accessible parking spaces can make a huge difference. That needs to be brought into considerations about pollution zones, for example, and congestion zones. There is also issues around affordable housing and adaptive housing, particularly for young graduates with maybe more complex physical needs. Access to those things may make it possible to work. I am not sure to what extent the Mayor can influence social care but that is equally important in meaning that people can take those things for granted and get into work.

The other thing is awareness and visibility of disability, keeping it on the agenda and saying, "This is something that is important", because that in itself is massively powerful.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Staying with you for a moment, the Mayor will soon publish his Good Work Standard. I hope you are aware of that?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: I am sure you may well have been involved in developing that. What key thing would you hope to see in that?

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): I am not sure about one key thing, but if we are talking about disabled people within the Good Work Standard, positioning and recognising disabled people as a huge untapped talent pool and changing the language away from, "These are people that you should be doing a favour and getting into your workforce", to, "You would be very foolish to exclude them", is really important.

Joanne Asphall (Head of Programmes, Central London Forward): I certainly agree with the comments. We are starting to see some changes. I am particularly looking at how support is devolved to local areas. It is a really good start with employment support and also with education and skills as well. Continuing to look at things in that way, recognising that there is a need for national support but also not everything works at scale, would be good.

Then just picking up on making it easier, if we are going to look at how services are delivered locally, it is trying to make the aligning of services easier, involving employers and involving users of the services as well. That looks at things like the geographies of the way the city is split up, the way Jobcentre Plus districts are split and the way Clinical Commissioning Groups are split if we are looking at access to improved health services as well.

There are a number of things but overall it feels like it is a changing piece, which is really positive. More of the same. Then, when we are designing services, who are we consulting? How are we assessing what the need is and what already exists? Also, just picking up on my earlier point, when we are evaluating the services, how do

we understand what works so we can build on more of that? How are we sharing that and raising the awareness?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: We will be looking to see some of that in the Good Work Standard. Jon, Trust for London has called for the Mayor to create a disability employment task force to identify better how to address the problems that you have all spoken about today, especially in finding a job in London. Would you support the creation of such a pan-London task force?

Jon Rees (Making It Work Project Manager, Inclusion London): Yes, absolutely. Anything that is led and controlled by disabled people is a good start. It would be great if City Hall led by example, based everything that they propose to do on the social model of disability and involved disabled people. This would be a great place for a supported internship. Looking at how we can support that longer-term employment support that we have been talking about, how can we support disabled people through their whole journey, would be a great idea. That could produce guidance for employers on best practice, how to approach reasonable adjustments and positive action and to really understand their duties.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Tracey, I am going to put you on the spot. We are going to put you on the lift with the Mayor. You are on the ground floor and he is going to get off at the ninth. You have to think quickly. What would be your key asks of him?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Being strategic and holistic, and we have really yet to see that. The Mayor has the opportunity to look across the piece and have that bird's-eye view and to join up all of this stuff. We need that and we need to plan. Also, leading by example. We want to see what the Mayor is doing. How many disabled staff does the Mayor employ? What are the support and career development opportunities? Finally, using the Mayor's influence to champion our communities. Through contracts, leverage and procurement, the Mayor has an opportunity to ask those tough questions about diversity within the organisations that they are giving money to. There is a lot that could be done there.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: You talked about "by example". Of course the Mayor is Chair of Transport for London, one of the largest employers in London, so we would expect to see some good practice there, would we not?

Tracey Lazard (Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion London): Yes. We are working with a fellow DPO called Transport for All to provide a range of disability equality training for London Underground staff, both managers and frontline staff, and are getting great feedback. They are an amazing staff team to work with. We want to see that kind of disability equality training rolled out because that enables people to think differently and to start to approach this issue in a very different way.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes. James, I am sorry. It is always the way, is it not, when somebody asks the questions at one end and you are at the other? Sorry about that but just reflect on all that you have heard from your colleagues. Is there anything new that they have not addressed that you would like to see the Mayor tackle regarding the disability employment gap?

James Taylor (Head of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Scope): There is an opportunity to set out a real aspiration for how London should be the best city for disabled people in the world, and that is both in terms of employment and access. There is a really important position that the Mayor could take here about making London the most accessible city, building on the legacy of the 2012 Olympics. That could be committing to reduced shared spaces in planning frameworks. There is a real need to crack down on Blue

Badge fraud that is happening across the boroughs, which is costing a lot of money. Disabled people are not able to park where they need to. On the employment front, the Mayor is very welcome to visit Scope's employment service. In fact, all of the Assembly Members are more than welcome to come and see how voluntary support works without sanctions, without conditionality, and how we support disabled people into work.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Thank you so much. We have so much there, a whole sheet of this. Just quickly add something, Diane, which you had not heard.

Diane Lightfoot (Chief Executive Officer, Business Disability Forum): It was just on the Task Force, the creation of a task force. Something with that prominence and visibility that is headed up by the Mayor is very welcome. It is important that all the existing groups and task forces are brought into that so that we do not reinvent the wheel. I would also urge that such a task force is very much focused on action - because we know what the problems are - and really driving change and moving things forward.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: They are not going to start with a blank sheet, are they? That is not acceptable. No. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Your passion for this is so obvious to all. Thank you very much for your contributions.