

ECONOMY AND FAIR WORK COMMITTEE

**3rd Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
25 January 2023**

Disability Employment Gap

Note by the Clerk

Background

1. At its meeting on 14 December 2022, the Committee agreed to undertake preliminary scrutiny work around the disability employment gap.
2. “Disability employment gap” is the term used to refer to the difference in employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people. Statistics show that the disabled people in Scotland have a lower employment rate than non-disabled people.
3. The purpose of this inquiry is to look at how we can identify and address the barriers that limit the ability of disabled people to get and keep a job.
4. This initial evidence session will explore the structural barriers disabled people face in accessing the labour market or retaining employment, what difference Scottish Government policy has made since 2016, and identify any gaps.

Call for Views

5. The Committee has [launched a call for views](#) which will remain open until 16 February.
6. Following today’s evidence session, the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work will give evidence to the Committee on 8 February. Any views provided by the end of January will be made available for that evidence session with the Minister.
7. The Committee will come back to the topic later in the year and all views provided after January will be considered at that point.

Witnesses

8. The Committee will hear from—
 - Emma Congreve, Deputy Director, [Fraser of Allander Institute](#);
 - Ashley Ryan, Director of ENABLE Works, [ENABLE Scotland](#).
9. A written submission to the inquiry from ENABLE Scotland is attached at **Annexe A**.

**Economy and Fair Work Committee Clerks
20 January 2023**

Written submission received from ENABLE Scotland

About ENABLE Scotland and ENABLE Works

ENABLE Scotland was founded in 1954 by five sets of parents of children who had a learning disability who believed that their children had the same rights as everyone else to live the life they choose as an equal member of the community. 68 years later, this remains what ENABLE Scotland believes and fights for today. Discussions with our members (people who have a learning disability and family carers of people who have a learning disability) through ENABLE Scotland's Scottish Council have informed this response.

ENABLE Scotland is part of the ENABLE Group – one of the country's largest care charities, with income exceeding £50m in 2021/22, and delivering 2.5 million hours of social care and support each year to more than 1,000 people across 27 of Scotland's local authority areas.

Across the Group's three pillars, we deliver community projects and campaigns, employability and training, and human rights-driven self-directed social care and support for over 9,000 people throughout Scotland. ENABLE Scotland's charity is empowered by a 12,000 strong membership and supporter base, and provides direct support to over 2,500 individuals each year as follows:

Campaigns – collective advocacy to break down barriers to an equal society and full access to human rights for all people who have a learning disability.

Connects – access to high quality information, advice, and advocacy support for individuals and families about their rights to support.

Communities – community-based services which develop inclusive opportunities for all, including Local Area Coordination, 30 affiliated branches and 22 self- ACE groups.

Enable Works

ENABLE Works is one of the largest and most successful specialist employment support teams in Scotland. ENABLE Works delivers the following programmes:

Stepping Up - A transformational school-based programme enabling school leavers with additional support needs to successfully transition into employment, modern apprenticeships, further education or training.

Breaking Barriers – Opening up access to higher education and real work-life experience with major corporate employers for young people who have a learning disability. Delivered in partnership with Strathclyde Business School, Edinburgh Napier University, Scottish Power, STV and EY, and expanding further to new partner employers in 2023.

All In – Supported employment programmes for people with disabilities or long term health conditions, including training, soft skills-building, interview technique, work placements, and – crucially – ongoing support once in employment to boost job retention.

Diversity and Inclusion – Support for employers to adjust workplace practices, including advice, guidance, disability awareness training, and support with interviews, onboarding, reasonable adjustments for accessibility and health and safety purposes, and mentoring for employees with disabilities.

Questions

What progress has been made since 2016 to reduce and remove barriers faced by disabled people to access Scotland’s labour market?

- As of 2021, the Scottish Government estimated that the disability employment gap was 31.2% (Scotland’s labour market: People Places and Regions – Protected characteristics. Statistics from the annual population survey 2021). The disability employment gap has decreased by 1.4 percentage points since 2019.
- The disability employment rate gap in 2021 was lowest for those aged 16-24 and highest for those ages 35 to 49.
- In terms of people with learning disabilities of the 23,584 adults known to local authorities with learning disabilities, 4.1% are in employment (Fraser of Allander).
- ENABLE Works has had great success with supporting disabled people not only into employment but also to help disabled people gain invaluable skills that are extremely beneficial for employment and more. ENABLE Works is one of the largest and most successful employment support teams in Scotland.
- ENABLE Works supports 650 people into paid work each year.
 - **All In:** ENABLE Works “All In” model is a employment programme that consistently delivers high quality careers for disabled people across Scotland. It is currently delivered in 14 local authorities in Scotland and provides holistic, person centred support for people who have disabilities or long-term health conditions. It delivers 40% job outcomes, which is significantly higher than other supported employment programmes which deliver on average 25% job outcomes. All in delivers 3.5 jobs for the average cost of 1 job on traditional employability programmes.
 - **Stepping up:** Stepping Up is a comprehensive support programme for young people aged 14-19 which takes participants from an initial investigation of the world of work, through a process of discovery and planning for their future, to engagement with employers in real workplace settings. 98% of the young people on Stepping Up go into a positive destination, significantly higher than the national average but more importantly 30% of those young people go into paid employment, 10% go

into a Modern Apprenticeship and the other 58% go onto vocationally focussed college and training.

- **Breaking Barriers:** We know very few school leavers with a learning disability go onto attend higher education institutions (10.4% of pupils with a learning disability compared with 48.7% of pupils without a learning disability). [Breaking Barriers](#) is a ground breaking partnership enabling young people who have learning disabilities to attend one of the leading business schools in the UK within a university campus, achieve an accredited qualification and gain real work experience with some of the largest employers in Scotland.

Stepping up and Breaking Barriers are examples of the successes of building on aspirations from an earlier age. This evidences that with the right support, from an earlier age, we are able to have a significant positive impact on the disability employment gap moving forward.

What are the remaining challenges, and why has progress been difficult?

- One of the main barriers for people with disabilities, in particular those with learning disabilities begins prior to entering the workforce or the search for employment. As we know few people with learning disabilities go onto further education and often do not leave school with many qualifications, data from the Summary Statistics for attainment and initial leavers destination, 2022 showed that in 2020/21 17.4% of pupils with a learning disability had no NQ qualifications at level 2 or better, compared with 0.9% of pupils without a learning disability.
- A lack of qualifications can be detrimental to the success of a young person with learning disabilities. Beyond qualifications, young people are not always being supported within higher education to think about employment and their future.
- For many young disabled people there is a postcode lottery of appropriate specialist support to transition into the world of work which cannot be performed by a teacher – for example accessible work placements and work experiences.
- Barriers to employment go beyond education, someone with a learning disability may face multiple barriers to employment. People with learning disabilities may have low aspirations as a result of not being supported to realise their potential as well as a lack of support from those around them. There is the issue of the perception of employers and the overall lack of understanding of what it means to have a learning disability.
- Employer knowledge and confidence is still a major barrier for disabled people looking to access the world of work. Employers need training and guidance on accessible recruitment practices and support to ensure they have a diverse workforce which better reflects the communities they serve.

- Access to work remains a significant barrier for people who require support when they are in the workplace. Clients often wait months for an assessment and the process can often be incredibly stressful.
- In-work support is a vital element of ensuring people can not only gain a job but sustain a job and thrive, however it is often unfunded and there is a lack of focus on the importance of In Work support in sustaining positive outcomes.
- COVID has further exacerbated the issue, and it potentially the cause for the rise in the employment gap from 2019 to 2020. However, COVID has also just reinforced and highlighted the current and existing issues that had yet to be rectified prior to the pandemic.
- Progress has been difficult in part due to the lack of support for young people in education to help them develop those goals and aspirations; COVID has impacted the employability landscape; lack of understanding on how to support people with learning disabilities from the employers end – programmes needed for both the employers support and the employee (again programmes through ENABLE Works provide this support and show that it is beneficial for both the employer and the employee).

What policy measures would you like to see to support disabled people and employers to increase participation rates in the labour market?

- More supported employment programmes building on established models of success:
 - ENABLE Works provides supported employment across Scotland. In 2021/22 the All In programme supported 1,965 people with an employment rate of 40% and the cost per job outcome being £2,333.
 - All In delivers 3.5 jobs for the average cost of 1 job on traditional employability programmes.
 - In 2021/22 ENABLE Works was active in 28 local authorities and supported 4,400 people.
- There is an opportunity with the Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill to ensure that rights of people with learning disabilities rights are enshrined within law with measures to ensure these rights are safeguarded and promoted. We hope this will challenge and address barriers people with learning disabilities face in society, including barriers to employment.
- The Transitions Bill provides an opportunity to better support young people with learning disabilities in their transition from school into employment or further education.
- In 2023, the Institute of Directors established an Independent Commission chaired by Lord Shinkwin to explore how equality, diversity and inclusion in workplaces can be promoted, with the Chief Executive of ENABLE Theresa Shearer contributing to this initiative as member of the Commission. The

Commission report [‘The Future of Business: harnessing diverse talent for success’](#) makes a series of recommendations to governments and employers to bring about the most favourable conditions for businesses and directors to flourish, with specific reference to gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation.

ENABLE believes adoption of these policies can also help address the disability employment gap as well as increasing wider diversity in workplaces. While a number of the recommendations are focused on UK Government responsibilities, for example making the right to request flexible working a day one employment right and introducing mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting and disability workforce reporting for employers with 250 or more staff, the report also brings forward practical recommendations the Scottish Government could take forward or encourage businesses in Scotland to adopt including:

- Encourage employers to publish, either as part of their accounts or on their website, details of their inclusion strategy with specific requirements and objectives, along with an annual report on progress.
- Support development and promotion of best practice to establish a culture that promotes increased levels of voluntary self-identification by employees and best practice in analysis and reporting of data to promote greater inclusion.
- Support small and medium-sized enterprises on the best use of data to inform ED&I strategies, for example through the provision of guidance and training on the most useful types of data to collect and data collection, best practice in engaging with employees to encourage self-identification, and translating data into action plans.
- Ensure that all future government economic and industrial strategies include consideration of the importance of fostering a diverse and fair economy with an effective workforce fit for the future, to drive future economic success.

What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on disabled people’s experience of the labour market?

- A survey conducted by the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities in 2019 found that 64% of respondents had seen changes in the support that they received.
- The social and economic impact of Covid-19 was felt by many across the UK. The pandemic highlighted existing inequalities within the labour force as it exasperated them.
- Covid saw a reduction in support programmes, where possible some moved onto virtual working.
- The third sector plays a crucial role in supporting people with learning disabilities, but as the Fraser of Allander Institute suggests emerging evidence

shows that in the wake of the pandemic third sector organisations faced severe funding restrictions.

- Fraser of Allander highlighted that people with learning disabilities in work are disproportionately employed in the sectors that have seen the biggest decline in hours, such as hospitality.
- According to the Office for National Statistics, outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020, 26.5% of people with 'severe or specific learning difficulties' were in employment, in comparison to an average of 53.6% for disabled people.

Appendix: ENABLE Works supporting employees to progress

Dylan's story

Dylan is autistic and has a visual impairment, and first engaged with ENABLE's Stepping Up transitions programme at his school in Airdrie. After leaving school, Dylan applied unsuccessfully for a number of administrative jobs.

ENABLE Works had a vacancy for an administrative role which, knowing Dylan's talents and personality, they thought he would be a good fit for. They designed a skills-based assessment interview, testing his ability with word processing, emails, and databases, rather than asking formal questions in an interview setting.

Dylan's application was successful, and to support him to succeed in the role ENABLE Works:

- Had a dedicated job coach work with Dylan.
- Helped Dylan apply for an Access to Work grant so he could get a taxi from his home and back.
- Ensured all Dylan's tasks were systematically broken down and listed for him, so he could learn the role and recognise which tasks he was struggling with.
- Supplied Dylan with a larger screen and allocated tasks that allowed him to take regular breaks from the computer.
- "Job carved" the role – removed certain parts of the job description he struggled with and might have typically been expected to do. These tasks were allocated to a colleague, with Dylan taking responsibility for some of that colleague's tasks in exchange.
- Gave him headphones to help him avoid distractions in the noisy reception area
- Allocated Dylan a quiet space to rest during lunchtime, as being in a busy office initially had the effect of 'sensory overload'.

- Dylan asked for opportunities for training and continuous professional development and was enrolled into an Enhanced Modern Apprenticeship in Business Administration, which allowed him to use his work to evidence application of learning and was not limited to traditional classroom learning and examination assessments.

He passed in 2019.

Dylan has now progressed to take on additional responsibilities in supporting the ENABLE Works team to train employers, including visiting businesses to talk to their employees about employing someone with autism or a disability.

As Dylan has developed into his role, many of the supports and adaptations put in place are no longer required as his knowledge, aptitude, and confidence have grown, and he was named ENABLE's Young Employee of the Year in 2019.

ENABLE Scotland
20 January 2023