



HOUSE OF LORDS

Public Services Committee

1st Report of Session 2024–25

**Think Work First:
The transition from
education to work
for young disabled
people**

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Public Services Committee

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Summary	3
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Young disabled people and the transition to work	5
This Inquiry	5
Box 1: Language used by different bodies	6
Key statistics	6
The challenge	7
Figure 1: Employment levels and disability employment gap - April 2013 to December 2023	7
Our report	7
Chapter 2: What works: a blueprint for a strategy for young disabled people	9
Working in partnership with disabled people	9
Case studies	10
Vocational Profiling: a tailored, individualised approach to careers advice	10
ThinkForward: supporting young disabled people throughout school and into work	11
Supported internships: placements that lead to jobs for those furthest from work	12
The COMPASS Tool in Scotland: Joined up, accessible information	13
Individualised Placement and Support: national employment programmes providing tailored, targeted support	14
Chapter 3: Preparing for work: how effective is the education system?	16
Education, Health and Care Plans	16
Careers education, information, advice and guidance	18
Quality of advice and access to specialist advice	19
Attitudes and perceptions	20
Further Education and young disabled people	21
Further Education curricula and qualifications	22
BTECs and the transition to T Levels	22
Bridging the gap between education and work	24
Work experience	24
Supported internships	25
Apprenticeships	26
Disabled people's experience in Higher Education	27
Chapter 4: Entering the workforce: the role of employment services and programmes	29
National Careers Service	29
Jobcentre Plus	29
Access to Work	31
Supported employment approaches	32
Universal Support	33

Chapter 5: Going to work: overcoming discrimination and securing rights	35
Discrimination	35
Workplace rights	36
Reasonable Adjustments	36
Poor employer awareness of disability rights in the workplace	37
Chapter 6: Supporting employees: upholding workplace rights	39
Enforcement of rights	39
Awareness of rights	41
Earlier resolution	42
Mandatory reporting	42
Chapter 7: Supporting employers: creating inclusive workplaces	45
Disability Confident	45
Disability Confident Leaders	46
Reform of the Disability Confident scheme	47
Support with Employee Health and Disability service	48
Support from employer organisations	48
Summary of conclusions and recommendations	50
Appendix 1: List of Members and declarations of interest	57
Appendix 2: List of witnesses	59
Appendix 3: Call for evidence	67
Appendix 4: Summary of visit to Whipps Cross Hospital, 30 January 2024	70

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Q in footnotes refers to a question in oral evidence.

SUMMARY

Despite the efforts of successive governments, the disability employment gap remains at around 30 per cent, and disabled people continue to face barriers to securing long-term employment. Our inquiry has found that this starts from the moment a young disabled person enters education, in early years, primary and secondary school, and through to how they are prepared for work and supported during their transition from education to employment both within and outside the education system. We have learned of excellent, innovative, and exceptional services achieving outstanding results in this area, but we have also heard about systems that lack resources, aspiration and expertise, and of employers who are frequently unwilling or who feel unable to bring disabled people into the workplace.

We believe that this can change. The new Government has shown a clear desire to get young disabled people working. To do this, it needs to focus on early support and intervention, helping young disabled people to access and stay in work when they leave education. It must also work with employers to give them the support they need to create inclusive workplaces. This report sets out the ways in which this can be achieved.

Our inquiry specifically focused on the experiences of young disabled people in the transition from education to work. We did not explore the wider public service environment—transport, health and social care, the wider education system, or the welfare system—but we acknowledge their fundamental role in determining whether disabled people can access work and we heard how, in many cases, they are failing. Chapter 1 sets out the scope of this report, as well as the context in which this report has been written.

The challenges are significant but, as shown in Chapter 2, not insurmountable. Throughout our inquiry we saw many effective ways of supporting young disabled people to succeed: suitable careers education, tailored support in schools and the workplace, and clear, accessible information about the transition to work. In many cases, however, these were isolated examples or were pilot schemes at risk of being scrapped. The new Government has an opportunity to draw on these examples and deliver effective services that fully support young disabled people into work.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the education system prepares young disabled people for the world of work. Too often, education and careers services do not provide the tailored, specialist support that young disabled people need, or set low expectations for young disabled people from a very early age. However, there are clear examples of where things can work—if a young disabled person can get a supported internship, an accessible apprenticeship, or simply good careers advice and work experience, they are much more likely to obtain fulfilling careers further down the line.

Chapter 4 examines the employment services that kick in once someone has left school. Many, particularly Jobcentre Plus, are simply not delivering. However, we heard how newer, supported employment programmes can be transformational and deliver real value for money. These form a strong foundation for rapid progress in this area for the new Government.

We then shift our focus to the workplace itself. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the challenges young disabled people can face from employers, and how their workplace rights are upheld. Many employers do a great job of supporting disabled job applicants and employees, but too many disabled people still face discrimination in recruitment and the workplace, and the current enforcement framework is simply inadequate. It can and must be fixed.

Employers are fundamental to creating inclusive workplaces. Chapter 7 explores how to support businesses in this. We celebrate businesses and public services that already create workplaces where young disabled people can flourish. But many employers remain scared of 'doing the wrong thing' and find it simpler to do nothing, missing out on a pool of talented people. With the right support, both from Government and from other employers, many more workplaces could welcome young disabled people.

There will, of course, always be some people who are not able to work due to their disability or health condition: they must receive appropriate support from the welfare system. However, many young disabled people yearn to work and to have a career. Too many are written off, told at every stage that 'people like them' will never thrive in work.

This has to change. The presumption has to be, at every stage of a young disabled person's development, that they are fully capable of thriving in work, as long as they have the appropriate support. Aspiration has to be at the heart of support for young disabled people. We need to Think Work First.

Think Work First: The transition from education to work for young disabled people

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Young disabled people and the transition to work

1. Disability impacts individual lives in many different ways and, for many young disabled people, this can be central to their lives and to their employment outcomes. Some young disabled people require significant support at all times, while others will be able to reach the very top of their profession with little support. Between those extremes, there is an enormous range of experience. Against this background, we could never hope to cover the full range of the challenges and successes encountered by every young disabled person in a report of this nature. Inevitably, therefore, much of our focus has been on where things are not going so well. But we recognise that we do not, and cannot, speak to the experiences of all young disabled people.
2. In particular, during the course of this inquiry, we heard of just how much many employers value their disabled employees, and how important these employees are to business success. Disabled people are as much a part of our society as anyone else, and any of us could become disabled at any time during our lives. Creating the systems for young disabled people to thrive in the workplace, therefore, ultimately benefits all of us. In the context of a skills shortage in the UK, ensuring that we unleash the full potential of all of our young people is vital for the country's success.

This Inquiry

3. We launched our inquiry on 26 May 2023, with a call for evidence issued in a range of accessible formats. We began hearing oral evidence in November 2023. In addition to the oral and written evidence (listed in Appendix 2), we held a private seminar and ten online engagement events with groups of young disabled people and their families. We are profoundly grateful to all who helped us with this inquiry, in particular those who shared their stories and personal experiences. Their input has been anonymised, summarised and published online.¹ We also visited Whipps Cross Hospital in Leytonstone, where we learnt about the supported internship programme for young disabled people with learning disabilities operated through the hospital. A note from that visit is in Appendix 4. For this inquiry we appointed a Specialist Adviser, Professor Charlotte Pearson, Professor for Social Policy at the University of Glasgow. We are grateful to her for sharing her advice and expertise throughout this inquiry.
4. As part of our call for written evidence, we asked whether there were particular groups of disabled people on whom we should focus, such as young people

¹ See Public Services Committee, 'Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry' (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).² We received a variety of responses but, on balance, the evidence leans towards a pan-disability approach, and our report reflects this.

5. There is a range of different terminology used to describe this large group, depending on which service is speaking and what stage the young person has reached. We have used ‘young disabled people’ throughout this report to refer to all young people with disabilities, long-term health conditions and special educational needs.

Box 1: Language used by different bodies

Schools, colleges, and local authority services aimed at young people generally refer to Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) when referring to people in education.³ Some schools may, however, use the term ‘additional needs’⁴ and, in Scotland, the term ‘additional support needs’ is used instead of SEN.

In higher education, ‘disability’ is “used to cover all health conditions, including mental health, physical health and learning differences”.⁵

Employers will usually reference disability or disabled people in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Section 6 of that Act states that a person has a disability if they have a “physical or mental impairment” that has a “substantial and long-term adverse effect on [their] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”⁶

Key statistics

6. The Labour Force Survey states that there are 10.4 million working aged disabled people⁷ (aged between 16–64) in England⁸—approximately a quarter of the total working age population of 35.6 million at the time of the last census in 2021.⁹ Out of a total of just under 9.1 million pupils in England’s schools,¹⁰ 1.7m million (19 per cent) receive support relating to special educational needs. Of these, approximately 25 percent—434,354—have an EHCP¹¹ in place.¹²

2 See Chapter 3 for an explanation of Education, Health and Care Plans.

3 Written evidence from UCAS ([YDP0046](#))

4 [Q 65](#) (Anne Murdoch)

5 Written evidence from UCAS ([YDP0046](#))

6 [Equality Act 2010](#)

7 The detailed basis for the definition of disability is set out in Office for National Statistics, *Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data Sources - Primary Principles - Long-lasting Health Conditions and Illnesses; Impairments and Disability* (May 2015): <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/harmonisation/primary-set-of-harmonised-concepts-and-questions/long-lasting-health-conditions-and-illnesses--impairments-and-disability.pdf> [accessed 19 September 2024]

8 Office for National Statistics, ‘Labour Market Status of Disabled People’ (13 August 2024): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08> [accessed 11 July 2024]

9 HM Government, ‘Working age population’ (31 March 2023): <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/working-age-population/latest/> [accessed 19 September 2024]

10 HM Government, ‘Schools, pupils and their characteristics’ (8 June 2023) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2022-23> [accessed 11 July 2024]

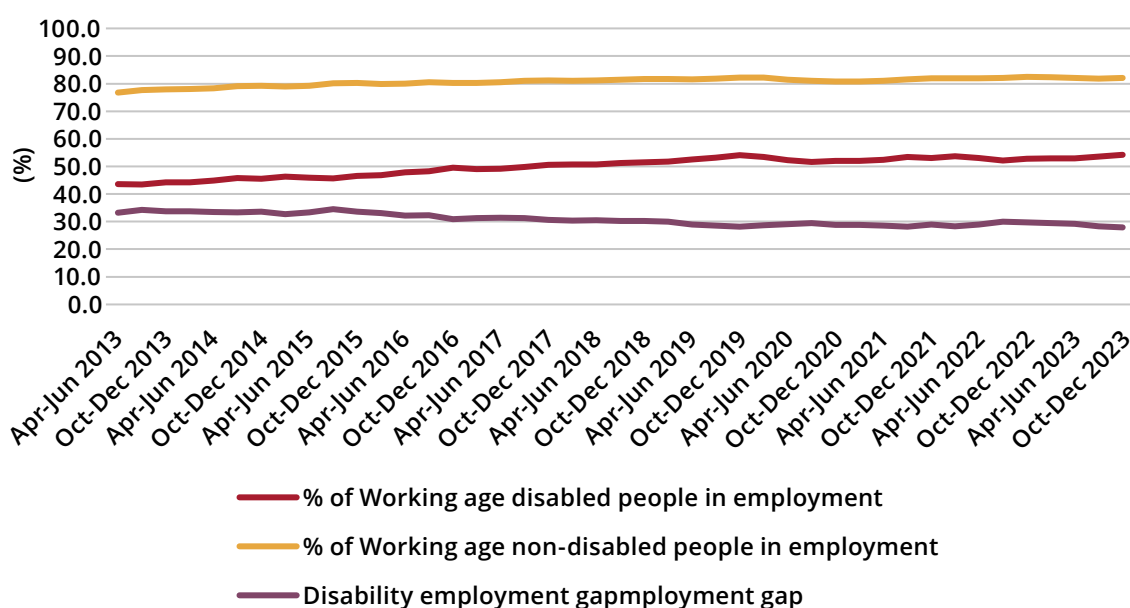
11 See Chapter 3 for an explanation of Education, Health and Care Plans.

12 HM Government, ‘Special educational needs in England’ (20 June 2024) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england> [accessed 19 September 2024]

The challenge

7. Young disabled people face significant challenges and barriers during the transition from education to employment. As a result, this period of their lives is often difficult, with negative experiences affecting their capacity to secure meaningful employment. This can be seen by the disability employment gap—the difference between the proportion of working age non-disabled people and working age disabled people—which has remained at around 30 per cent over the last decade.¹³

Figure 1: Employment levels and disability employment gap - April 2013 to December 2023



Source: Office for National Statistics, 'Labour Market Status of Disabled People' (13 August 2024): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08> [accessed 27 September 2024]

8. As a result of the COVID pandemic, the situation for young disabled people has worsened in recent years.¹⁴ Leonard Cheshire, an organisation that supports disabled people, reported that, in Autumn 2021, 89 per cent of 18-24 year old disabled people said that their work had been affected by the pandemic, with one in ten losing their jobs.¹⁵ In addition to the effect on work, research has also demonstrated the negative impact of the pandemic, and particularly of lockdown restrictions, on the mental health of young disabled people.¹⁶

Our report

9. Throughout our inquiry, we received a substantial quantity of evidence regarding education and work-related services for young disabled people,

13 OECD; 'Disability, Work and Inclusion: Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices' (11 October 2022): https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/disability-work-and-inclusion_1ea5e9c-en [accessed 11 July 2024]

14 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (YDP0054)

15 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire (YDP0033)

16 Nicola Theis et.al. 'The effects of COVID-19 restrictions on physical activity and mental health of children and young adults with physical and/or intellectual disabilities' *Disability and Health Journal*, vol 14, issue 3 (3 (July 2021): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1936657421000054> [accessed 19 September 2024]

alongside a smaller quantity on the wider services on which young disabled people may rely during the transition into work, such as social care, welfare, health, mental health, and transport services. Reflecting the balance of evidence, our report focuses on education and employment services.

10. Chapter 2 identifies several examples of best practice which, if made more widely available could significantly improve support and outcomes for young disabled people. From there, we attempt to take the reader through the young disabled person's journey from education to employment. Chapter 3 examines how young disabled people are prepared for the world of work when in education, Chapter 4 investigates the support provided to young disabled people during the transition from education to employment outside of the education system, and Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine the role of employers and how disabled people's rights are enforced in the workplace.
11. Although this report sets out a range of interventions that we believe the Government should make, no single recommendation could achieve all of the change that is necessary. Collectively, however, they might remove some of the barriers that young disabled people face and improve their chances of successfully moving into work and thriving in their careers. Where our recommendations relate to devolved matters, they apply primarily to England. Many issues will, however, be of interest to the devolved governments in the constituent nations of the UK.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT WORKS: A BLUEPRINT FOR A STRATEGY FOR YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE

12. As we have set out in the introduction, and discuss in detail in the chapters following this, young disabled people face considerable challenges in their transition from education to employment. At every stage of their journey they face bureaucratic obstacles, discrimination, and a lack of understanding as they navigate a world that is designed for non-disabled people. Nonetheless, throughout the inquiry we heard, read, and saw for ourselves clear examples of excellent practice. In this chapter, we will stress the importance of listening to and working with individual disabled people and, through a series of case studies, explore what works. Our aim is for these examples to serve as a foundation for a revitalised strategy for supporting young disabled people not only to make the transition from education to employment successfully, but to flourish as they do so.

Working in partnership with disabled people

13. Before we examine what works, however, we need to address a critical issue in the development of policy affecting all disabled people, and especially young disabled people: co-production, or giving as much weight to the lived experiences of disabled people as to the professionals who work with them, particularly in policy-making. As a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Government has committed to upholding its principles, including closely consulting disabled people, including disabled children, when making policy and drafting legislation that concerns them, and ensuring that disabled children are able to express their views to the same extent as their non-disabled counterparts.¹⁷
14. Dr Marie Caslin and Ellie Curran, respectively an academic and a disabled student who submitted joint written evidence to the Committee, stated that “it is essential that ... we listen to the voices of young disabled people to ensure we have a more inclusive society”.¹⁸ Scott Richardson Read, Policy and Development Worker for the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland, argued that “the people who are experiencing bias will tell you what the solutions are ... if you give them the space”.¹⁹ This was also raised in discussions between the Committee and young disabled people, with a nonverbal participant stating:

“The Government needs to listen to people like me. Just because I do not speak does not mean I cannot make a contribution to society. Autistic people like me feel as if we have no value to the workplace and it is hard for us to make a meaningful contribution unless we are heard.”²⁰

17 United Nations, ‘UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’, Article 4(3) & Article 7(3): https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=en [accessed 11 July 2024]

18 Written evidence from Dr Marie Caslin and Ellie Curran ([YDP0030](#)); see also [Q 4](#) (Alexandra Gowlland) [Q 170](#) (Heather Hall, Alex Harrison), and written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#)), Scope ([YDP0061](#)) and National Autistic Society ([YDP0032](#)).

19 [Q 167](#) (Scott Richardson Read)

20 See Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>.

15. Despite these strong arguments in favour of co-production, Scott Richardson Read told us that it is “massively undervalued and misunderstood.”²¹ Bethany Bale, policy and campaigns officer at Disability Rights UK, a disabled people’s organisation, stated that “there is always a lack of co-production with disabled people” and that government programmes “are not in line with or aware of the reality of the barriers that disabled people face”.²²
16. **It is vital that services supporting young disabled people are co-produced with those young people, and with disabled people who have already experienced the transition out of education—regardless of whether they have been able to move into work.**

Case studies

17. The examples that we encountered of effective, high-quality support for young disabled people spanned the entire journey from education to work—with localised schemes addressing problems seen nationally. While no single programme or scheme would address all of the many barriers that young disabled people face during this transition, making these initiatives more widely available, or implementing them nationally, could make a significant difference for young disabled people aspiring to enter, and succeed in, the workplace.

Vocational Profiling: a tailored, individualised approach to careers advice

18. We turn first to the start of the transition, examining the critical role that schools play, and particularly the role of suitable, tailored careers advice. We heard that careers advice for young disabled people is often generic and limited, frequently failing to take into account the additional challenges a young disabled person may face in the workplace, or to consider their ambitions and aspirations for their future careers.²³
19. One way in which this advice can be greatly enhanced is through vocational profiling, a key component of the Supported Employment model for enabling disadvantaged people to access and remain in employment.²⁴ This is where a young person works with a specialist, such as a job coach, to identify their experiences, skills, aspirations, and job preferences, alongside their learning needs. This process results in the development of a profile, which is used to match the young person with an appropriate job or career, and to inform the young person about their career options.
20. We heard how this approach was being used in Essex.²⁵ Suzanne Davis, the SEND Strategy Lead for Preparing for Adulthood at Essex County Council, told us this approach is “fundamental in supporting people to build their strengths and to give them the skillsets they need, and for employers to understand what works for them.”²⁶ She also stated that it enabled those

21 [Q 167](#) (Scott Richardson Read); see also written evidence from Dr Charlotte Pearson, Prof Janice McLaughlin et al ([YDP0029](#)).

22 [Q 44](#) (Bethany Bale)

23 See Chapter 3 for further information. See also [Q 96](#) (Katherine Horler) and written evidence from Humber Learning Consortium ([YDP0025](#)) and Guide Dogs for the Blind Association ([YDP0053](#)).

24 See Chapter 4 for more information, and British Association for Supported Employment (Base), ‘What is supported employment?’: <https://www.base-uk.org/what-supported-employment> [accessed 19 September 2024].

25 [Q 150](#) (Suzanne Davies)

26 *Ibid.*

supporting young disabled people to ensure they accessed work placements that related to their strengths.²⁷

21. Laura Davis, Chief Executive of the British Association for Supported Employment and Inclusive Trading CIC (BASE), told us that the vocational profiling approach had also been seen to work in Kent “where they have embedded vocational profiling into mainstream schools.”²⁸ She added that:

“good-quality vocational profiling by qualified staff who have job-coaching support which wraps around it is achieving some positive outcomes for young people through a mixture of different employment routes, whether internships, apprenticeships or straight into work.”²⁹
 22. **Vocational profiling provides an effective way to identify the aspirations and development needs of young disabled people at an early stage and may enable schools and colleges to put the right careers support in place.**
 23. *The Government should make vocational profiling a standard part of careers information, advice and guidance for young disabled people in schools. The Government should have developed a clear plan, with a full timeline for implementing this, by September 2025, taking into account the training that careers advisers and leaders will need.*
- ThinkForward: supporting young disabled people throughout school and into work*
24. We heard that there is a lack of continuity in the careers advice and support young disabled people receive, with careers advisers changing at different stages of the transition from education to work, and information about aspirations and advice not being retained or passed on when the young person moves school or college.³⁰
 25. Some organisations are trying to tackle this problem: ThinkForward is “a charity that works to empower young people in the UK through long-term coaching ... [equipping them] with the skills and experience they need to move into work or further education after they finish school”.³¹ It provides “ready-for-work” programmes targeted at young people who face additional barriers, such as children growing up in poverty, those at risk of exclusion, and those with learning disabilities and autism. The charity works with young people from the age of 16 until they are in secure paid employment or reach 25. Half of the young people on ThinkForward programmes have special educational needs “but do not necessarily have an EHCP”.³²
 26. Through vocational profiling, one-to-one coaching, trips to workplaces, business mentoring, and work experience, ThinkForward encourages young people to develop their aspirations and work-related skills and gain insight into different careers and roles. Business mentoring and coaching provide the young people with further advice and support on their journey into work. According to the charity, 46 per cent of young disabled people with learning

27 *Ibid.*

28 [Q 112](#) (Laura Davis)

29 *Ibid.*, see also written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#)).

30 Written evidence from Career Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#))

31 Think Forward, ‘About’: <https://thinkforward.org.uk/about/> [accessed 19 September 2024]

32 Written evidence from ThinkForward ([YDP0076](#))

disabilities and autism who completed ThinkForward’s programme “have been gainfully employed”.³³ This compares with the background employment rate for this group of 4.8 per cent.³⁴ The charity calculates the social return on investment in the programme at “£1.75 for every £1 invested. At a cost of £1.4m it has delivered almost £4.5m of value.”³⁵

27. **Continuous, joined up support for young disabled people, starting in school and continuing until they have secured secure employment, bridges the gap between education and work. It empowers young disabled people both to enter the workplace and to thrive once in employment and, through this, provides concrete value for money.**
28. *The Government should work with local authorities to improve the availability of ‘ready to work’ programmes such as that provided by ThinkForward, to support young people from school until they are settled in work. A plan and timeline for the rollout of such programmes nationally should be developed once the plan for embedding vocational profiling in the school careers advice system has been completed, and should be published no later than the end of the first quarter of 2026.*

Supported internships: placements that lead to jobs for those furthest from work

29. We heard that, for a range of reasons, including logistical challenges,³⁶ discrimination³⁷ and a lack of will and support among schools and employers,³⁸ many young disabled people struggle to access relevant work experience or placements.³⁹ This prevents them from gaining knowledge and insight about possible careers or the world of work. Supported internships are programmes in which a young disabled person with an EHCP can access a work-based study programme focused on a work placement. Throughout the programme, a trained job coach supports both the young disabled person and the employer to ensure that the young person’s needs are satisfied.
30. During our inquiry, the Committee visited Whipps Cross, a hospital that hosts supported internships for young disabled people, working with the organisation DFN Project SEARCH. At Whipps Cross, interns undergo several placements in different parts of the hospital, gaining a range of experience in the workplace and learning and using different skills. The hospital staff and young disabled people we spoke to during our visit were overwhelmingly positive about the internship, with hospital leaders claiming that the scheme had benefited the hospital, boosting staff retention, making current employees more likely to disclose that they had disabilities, improved internal communication, and boosted productivity.⁴⁰
31. We heard that 68 hospitals host supported internships, and that NHS supported internships often end with the NHS employer offering the interns

33 Written evidence from ThinkForward ([YDP0076](#))

34 NHS England, *Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework* (7 December 2023), p 20: <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/15/61FC2D/meas-from-the-asc-of-eng-2022-23-report.pdf> [accessed 11 July 2024]

35 Written evidence from ThinkForward ([YDP0076](#))

36 Written evidence from Careers England ([YDP0024](#)) and Gayle Brewer ([YDP0008](#))

37 Written evidence from Ambitious About Autism ([YDP0026](#))

38 [Q 62](#) (Nic Crossley). See also [Q 60](#) (Peter Monaghan).

39 Written evidence from Dr Marie Caslin and Ellie Curran ([YDP0030](#))

40 See Appendix 4.

full time, permanent contracts.⁴¹ More generally, high quality supported internships such as those delivered by DFN Project SEARCH result in 60-70 per cent of interns moving into employment.⁴²

32. The previous Government committed to doubling the number of supported internships to 5,000 by March 2025,⁴³ and to explore changing the eligibility criteria of supported internships.⁴⁴
33. **Supported internships are an effective way to support people furthest from the job market to gain experience of the workplace and enter the workforce. They also provide effective support for employers to address cultural and practical barriers to employing disabled people.**
34. *The Government should honour the commitment of the previous Government to double the number of supported internships and should take steps to ensure that as many young disabled people as possible are eligible for them.*
35. *The Government should take steps to increase the number of supported internships, and should introduce ambitious, time-bound rolling targets for this. Building on the success of supported internships in NHS Trusts, the campaign should include targeted work to increase public sector uptake of supported internships.*

The COMPASS Tool in Scotland: Joined up, accessible information

36. Throughout the inquiry we heard that young disabled people and their families can struggle to access information about the support they can and should receive.⁴⁵
37. In Scotland, the charity ARC Scotland has developed COMPASS, “a new online tool for disabled young people, their parents and carers, and the professionals who support them with the transition to young adult life”. It provides a “one-stop source of personalised information and guidance tailored to each young person’s needs and interests.”⁴⁶ This helps young disabled people and their families to find out what support they should receive, and explains when this support should kick in, taking full account of the young person’s circumstances and where they are on their journey into adulthood.⁴⁷ It also includes an anonymous feedback mechanism, gathering information on which services need improvement. There are three versions of the tool: one for young disabled people, one for parents and carers, and one for professionals and practitioners working with young people.⁴⁸
38. Scott Richardson-Read told the Committee that more than 1,100 people were using the tool 6 months after its launch in June 2023, and an interim

41 Written evidence from DFN Project Search ([YPD0043](#))

42 Written evidence from Alison Ismail ([YDP0002](#))

43 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0077](#))

44 *Ibid.*

45 [Q 44](#) (Bethany Bale); see also [Q 22](#) (Kim Hoque, Stephen Beyer), and written evidence from Activity Alliance ([YDP0015](#)); Dr Stella Chatzitheochari and Dr Angharad Butler-Rees ([YDP0045](#)) South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) ([YDP0052](#)), and United Response ([YDP0047](#)).

46 Written evidence from Scottish Transitions Forum ([YDP0023](#))

47 [Q 159](#) (Scott Richardson-Read)

48 Compass, *Compass Report (Interim) : Peoples’ experiences of transitions in Scotland* (January 2024): <https://scottishtransitions.org.uk/blank/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Compass-Report-Interim-Jan-2024.pdf> [accessed 11 July 2024]

report evaluating the tool highlighted multiple areas where the tool had provided information to parents and carers about learning opportunities and skills development services.⁴⁹

39. The previous Government’s Disability Action Plan, published in February 2024, included a commitment to develop an information hub aimed at people with a disabled person in their family in England.⁵⁰ However the hub was not launched before the 2024 general election.
40. **A single information hub that delivers tailored information to young disabled people and their parents or carers would help them navigate the transition from education to work, identify appropriate support, and understand their specific rights and entitlements.**
41. *Drawing on the experience of Scotland, the Government should develop an information hub modelled on ARC Scotland’s COMPASS tool for people in England. This should be developed through consultation and in partnership with disabled people and launched within 12 months of the date of this report.*

Individualised Placement and Support: national employment programmes providing tailored, targeted support

42. We heard that the employment support young disabled people can access through national programmes—such as from their Work Coach in a jobcentre or through school careers services—may be “very generic”.⁵¹ It frequently fails to take into account either the needs of the individual or needs related to specific conditions,⁵² and is delivered by people who have not been trained to support disabled people.⁵³
43. Individualised Placement and Support (IPS), by contrast, is “an evidence based model of supported employment”⁵⁴ offering intensive, tailored support for people to access work. This includes working with employers and employees to help them remain in employment, and links health and employment support by placing employment specialists in health teams.⁵⁵
44. The IPS programme for people with severe mental illness is expected to support 55,000 people to access work every year.⁵⁶ As part of the Universal Support programme—a broader government programme—IPS in Primary Care is in the process of being made available nationally. This is aimed at disabled people, including both those who are out of work and those who are in work but facing challenges linked to their disability. It has been rolled out

49 *Ibid.*

50 Cabinet Office, *Disability Action Plan*, CP 1014 (5 February 2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-action-plan> [accessed 19 September 2024]

51 [Q 53](#)(Audrey Ludwig)

52 Written evidence from Dr Rachel Moseley ([YDP0006](#))

53 Written evidence from Sense ([YDP0037](#))

54 NHS England, ‘Individual placement and support for severe mental illness’ (23 May 2023): <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/individual-placement-and-support-for-severe-mental-illness/> [accessed 11 July 2024]

55 IPS Grow, ‘What is IPS?’ (2014): <https://ipsgrow.org.uk/about/what-is-ips/> [accessed 19 September 2024]

56 NHS England, ‘Individual placement and support for severe mental illness’ (23 May 2023): <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/individual-placement-and-support-for-severe-mental-illness/> [accessed 11 July 2024]

in “42 top local authority areas and ... in two areas in Wales” and will reach 25,000 people.⁵⁷

45. **The Individualised Placement and Support model is a proven, effective way to support disabled people to access and remain in work. It is vital that momentum on rolling out IPS is maintained.**
46. *The Government should continue the rollout of IPS in Primary Care, setting ambitious targets both for nationwide availability of the scheme and for the number of people the scheme will support every year. The Government should publish detailed statistics on the progress of the scheme at least annually. We ask the Government to set out their policy in this area at the earliest possible opportunity.*

57 [Q 85](#) (Jennifer Heigham); see also written evidence from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ([YDP0075](#)).

CHAPTER 3: PREPARING FOR WORK: HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

47. This is not a report on SEN education, and this chapter focuses on the support young disabled people receive specifically relating to their transition to work while in education settings. However, we acknowledge that educational outcomes have a clear impact on the employability and future prospects of young disabled people. It is clear that young disabled people have poorer educational outcomes than their non-disabled counterparts:⁵⁸ in the academic year 2022–23, 43 per cent of 19 year olds with SEN achieved Level 2⁵⁹ in English and maths, compared to 84 per cent of their counterparts without identified SEN.⁶⁰ Disability Rights UK laid much of the blame for this on a lack of funding: they reported that there was a £2.1 billion shortfall in SEN provision in schools, and argued that “many disabled children are not currently able to access a full and inclusive education.”⁶¹
48. The current Government’s manifesto for the 2024 general election acknowledged that “too often our education... systems do not meet the needs of all children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities” and included a commitment to improving “inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as [ensuring that] special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.”⁶² We also note that in September 2024 Ofsted committed to putting children with SEN at the heart of its organisational reforms.⁶³
49. It is within this context that we explore the support available for young disabled people while in education.
50. ***There is an overarching concern that the education system is not delivering for young people with special educational needs. As a matter of urgency, the Government should review and improve the support young disabled people receive in the education system.***

Education, Health and Care Plans

51. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are intended for those up to the age of 25 who need support beyond special educational needs support. According to the Government “EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.”⁶⁴ Having an EHCP also makes the young person eligible for employment programmes such as supported internships,⁶⁵ and they are able to access apprenticeships with lower or fewer qualifications.

58 This point was raised by several contributors. See, for example, written evidence from Dr Rachel Moseley (YDP0006); Ambitious about Autism (YDP0026), and Shaw Trust (YDP0027).

59 GCSE or equivalent

60 Department for Education, ‘Academic Year 2022/23: Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25’ (25 April 2024): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/level-2-and-3-attainment-by-young-people-aged-19> [accessed 12 July 2024]

61 Written evidence from Disability Rights UK (YDP0065)

62 The Labour Party, *Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024* (June 2024), p 83: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf> [accessed 12 July 2024]

63 Ofsted, ‘Building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen’ (3 September 2024): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/building-a-better-ofsted-the-response-to-the-big-listen> [accessed 23 September 2024]

64 HM Government, ‘Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)’: <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help> [accessed 12 July 2024]

65 See Chapter 2 paras 30–36 above.

52. An application for an EHCP is typically made through the local authority, which will then undertake an assessment and draft an EHCP setting out the relevant interventions and support.⁶⁶ The number of applications increased from 114,482 in 2022 to 138,242 in 2023, a 23 per cent increase.⁶⁷ The parent or young person can challenge the local authority’s decision, through mediation and ultimately by appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Tribunal,⁶⁸ and in 2023, 10,300 mediation cases and 6,300 appeals to tribunal were reported.⁶⁹ In the academic year 2022–23, 98 per cent of decided appeals against local authority decisions are successful.⁷⁰ This has a cost to the public, with Pro Bono Economics estimating that “the public sector wasted nearly £60 million losing EHCP tribunal disputes—costs of over £46 million to local authorities and over £13.5 million to the courts” in 2021–22.⁷¹
53. Although local authorities are required to complete their assessments and issue a draft EHCP within 20 weeks of an application, there are reports of people waiting over a year for their draft EHCP.⁷² Young women also appear to be particularly disadvantaged in the application process—70 per cent of EHCP recipients are male⁷³—which witnesses attributed to barriers to women accessing healthcare,⁷⁴ young women “masking” their conditions,⁷⁵ and diagnostic biases.⁷⁶ Disability Rights UK also cited significant variation between local authorities, leading to a “postcode lottery when it comes to support”.⁷⁷ There is also evidence that children from families of a higher socio-economic status,⁷⁸ or living in affluent areas,⁷⁹ are more likely to be in receipt of an EHCP than those in poorer locations, suggesting that there are greater levels of unmet need in deprived areas. Even where an EHCP is

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- 66 HM Government, ‘Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help> [accessed 12 July 2024]
- 67 Department for Education, ‘Education, health and care plans’ (13 June 2024): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans> [accessed 12 July 2024]
- 68 HM Courts and Tribunals Service, ‘First Tier Tribunal : Special Educational Needs and Disability’: <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability> [accessed 12 July 2024]
- 69 Department for Education, ‘Education, health and care plans’ (13 June 2024): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans> [accessed 12 July 2024]
- 70 Ministry of Justice, ‘Tribunal Statistics Quarterly : July to September 2023’ (14 December 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023#annual-special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-statistics> [accessed 12 July 2024]
- 71 Pro Bono Economics, ‘Wasting money, wasting potential: The cost of SEND tribunals’ : <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/wasting-money-wasting-potential-the-cost-of-send-tribunals> [accessed 1 July 2024]
- 72 ‘Hundreds of children with special needs wait a year for support in England’, *The Guardian* (18 February 2024): <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/feb/18/hundreds-of-children-with-special-needs-wait-a-year-for-support-in-england> [accesses 27 September 2024]
- 73 Written evidence from Association of Colleges (AoC) (YDP0041); see also Department for Education, ‘Education, health and care plans’ (13 June 2024): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans> [accessed 12 July 2024]
- 74 Written evidence from Disabled Leaders Network (YDP0042)
- 75 Written evidence from Dr Gemma McKenna (YDP0009) and DFN Project Search (YDP0043)
- 76 Written evidence from DFN Project Search (YDP0043)
- 77 Written evidence from Disability Rights UK (YDP0065)
- 78 Louise Holt et al, ‘Disability, special educational needs, class capitals and segregation in schools: a population geography perspective’, *Population, Space and Place*, vol 25, issue 4 (21 January 2019): <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/psp.2229> [accessed 24 September 2024]
- 79 London School of Economics (LSE), ‘Children in affluent areas get more special needs support’, LSE News (13 November 2023): <https://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2023/k-November-2023/Children-in-affluent-areas> [accessed 30 September 2024]

obtained, we heard reports of schools⁸⁰ and colleges⁸¹ failing to deliver the support set out in EHCPs.

54. The Government’s SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan⁸² includes a range of interventions to improve EHCP processes.⁸³ However, the LGA argued that, while the plan makes councils responsible for the SEN system, it does not give them the powers and resources they need to make the system work properly and does not address “the fundamental cost and demand issues that are driving more councils into deficit.”⁸⁴
55. **Education, Health and Care Plans help young disabled people receive essential educational support and are fundamental to enabling many young disabled people to access employment programmes such as supported internships or more accessible apprenticeships. However, the current system does not deliver the vital support that many young disabled people need, nor does it adequately support the councils and schools expected to deliver it. The current lack of funding and delays in the application process mean that young disabled people are left without vital support, while local authorities waste public money fighting losing battles at tribunal. Alongside this, local authorities and education providers do not have the resources they need to fulfil the requirements set out in existing EHCPs.**
56. *The Government should increase its support for local authorities to deliver EHCPs and closely monitor both the timeliness and robustness of their decision-making with reference to the 20-week timeline for producing a draft EHCP, as well as the proportion of decisions overturned on appeal. We ask the Government to update the Committee by June 2025 on its progress in improving processes, reducing delays, and minimising SEND Tribunal costs and appeals with regard to EHCPs.*

Careers education, information, advice and guidance

57. Careers education, information, advice and guidance can support young disabled people to make plans that support their career aspirations. It helps students pick the right subjects at school, college and university, identify appropriate career pathways, and gain experience in the workplace. The provision of careers advice in schools is mandatory but we heard that the reality on the ground is of a “postcode lottery”⁸⁵, frequently reliant on the goodwill of individual schools and teachers. This leaves many young people without

80 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

81 [Q 124](#) (David Holloway); see also ‘School leaders warn of ‘full blown’ special needs crisis in England’, *The Guardian* (4 May 2024): <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/may/04/school-leaders-warn-of-full-blown-special-needs-crisis-in-england> [accessed 27 September 2024]

82 HM Government, *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan*, CP 800 (March 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63ff39d28fa8f527fb67cb06/SEND_and_alternative_provision_improvement_plan.pdf [accessed 12 July 2024]

83 These included improving the quality of wider SEN support in schools through the introduction of ‘National Standards’, standardising EHCP processes with increased use of digital technologies, improving decision-making by supporting local authorities by means of “local multi-agency panels”, and encouraging local authorities to introduce ‘Designated Social Care Officers’, who would support EHCP decision-making.

84 Written evidence from Local Government Association (LGA) ([YDP0074](#))

85 [Q 97](#) (Katherine Horler)

the information and guidance they need to move into work or training. This is all the more acute in the case of young disabled people, many of whom have more complex careers advice needs and require specialist support. It is important to note, however, that several of our recommendations in this area will benefit all young people—not just young disabled people.

Quality of advice and access to specialist advice

58. All young people are expected to receive support from qualified careers advisers⁸⁶ but witnesses told us of a general shortage of careers advisers. There is a lack of data about the number of careers advisers in England but Katharine Horler, the Executive Director of Careers England, described the situation as “a recruitment and retention crisis for careers advisers”.⁸⁷ Witnesses told us that this staff shortage was compounded by a lack of funding, and there were also concerns about the level of pay for careers advisers.⁸⁸ Katharine Horler also said that this had led many advisers to leave their roles to take up better paid job coach roles with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).⁸⁹
59. These systemic issues are compounded for young disabled people. Many witnesses told us of a “lack of tailored careers support for young people with disabilities or poor mental health”.⁹⁰ RNIB stated that careers support was often being delivered by “advisors without knowledge and understanding of sight loss, and of the support needed to overcome barriers to enter the workplace.”⁹¹ Poor quality careers advice was also highlighted by many of the young disabled people who spoke to the Committee.⁹²
60. A key problem is that there is “no systemic approach or requirement for SEND training” for careers advisers working with young disabled people.⁹³ While there is training available for careers advisers through bodies such as the Career Development Institute and the Careers and Enterprise Company,⁹⁴ this must be paid for either by the careers adviser or their employer and “does not typically lead to an increase in salary”, giving advisers little incentive to specialise. Level 7 careers advice qualifications include “some appreciation of SEND, but it is not an in-depth element”.⁹⁵

86 Careers advisers provide one-to-one support to young people, including information, advice and guidance. They may be employed by the school or commissioned from another organisation.

87 [Q 103](#) (Katharine Horler)

88 [Q 103](#) (David Morgan; Unison)

89 [Q 105](#) (Katharine Horler)

90 Written evidence from Humber Learning Consortium ([YDP0025](#)); Guide Dogs for the Blind Association ([YDP0053](#)), and RNIB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People ([YDP0028](#))

91 Written evidence from RNIB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People ([YDP0028](#))

92 See the Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

93 [Q 102](#) (David Morgan)

94 The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) is the national body for careers education in England. It supports collaboration between schools, colleges and employers to help pupils aged 12 to 18 access better careers advice. It is funded by DfE and is required to support schools for free and to target resources at areas of greatest need. It is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks in schools and colleges and supporting schools and colleges to implement the benchmarks, design careers programmes and engage with employers. See Careers and Enterprise Company, ‘Home’: <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/> [accessed 30 September 2024]

95 [Q 102](#) (David Morgan)

61. The previous Government told us that Careers Leaders⁹⁶—who are drawn from a school’s teaching cohort—can access high quality careers support training and training in SEN. This is provided by the CEC.⁹⁷ The Department for Education (DfE) added that training for careers leaders “includes a dedicated SEN Toolkit” and stated that training commissioned by the CEC is “required to deliver bespoke support and learning and signpost to appropriate resources.”⁹⁸ However, Hannah Sheehan, Director in the Skills Journey Directorate in the DfE acknowledged that “there is no leadership careers qualification”.⁹⁹ This may reduce incentives for teachers to become Careers Leaders, or for Careers Leaders to undertake training or use resources.
62. Added to all of these challenges is the regional variability in the content and quality of provision. Katharine Horler told us that there is “a complete and utter postcode lottery for young disabled people ... there is no common entitlement for young people across the system.”¹⁰⁰ This was a common theme across almost every element of our inquiry.
63. ***Before June 2025, DfE should collect and publish data on the number of full-time equivalent careers advisers practicing in England and the number of advisers who have received specialist training relating to pupils with SEN.***
64. ***The Government should review training for careers advisers and leaders. This review should consider a) making in-depth SEN training a mandatory aspect of careers adviser qualifications, b) introducing a National Professional Qualification on careers education, information advice and guidance for careers leaders which includes required training on SEN and careers. We ask the Government to provide an update on this by March 2025.***

Attitudes and perceptions

65. Young disabled people may be written off as not needing advice regarding work and careers due a mistaken perception that they will never be able to move into work. These perceptions can take root at a very young age. Laura Davis, told us of an occasion when she was in a nursery:

“They were having conversations with these little people, aged three or four, about what they want to be when they grow up. There was a boy in the room who said he wanted to be a bus (sic), and nobody questioned that, which is fine, but they skipped over the little girl with Down’s syndrome. They did not ask her.”

When Ms Davis asked the nursery staff why they had not asked this child, their response had been that they did not want to “raise their ambition”.¹⁰¹

66. In written evidence, BASE described the education sector as lacking ambition, resulting in young people still being assessed as “employable’ or ‘not’ when

96 Each school and college is expected to have a named Careers Leader to lead its careers education information and guidance programme, for example by arranging careers fairs or for specialist careers advisers to visit a school.

97 [Q 76](#) (Hannah Sheehan)

98 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0077](#))

99 [Q 93](#) (Hannah Sheehan)

100 [Q 97](#) (Katherine Horler)

101 [Q 111](#) (Laura Davis)

in fact the evidence shows that a presumption of employment leads to better employment outcomes for people.”¹⁰² Young disabled people told the Committee that they had experienced poor attitudes from careers advisers, with one describing careers advice as a “bit lazy”¹⁰³ and another reporting being treated as “a lower class of person—like I was never going to achieve anything”¹⁰⁴ The RNIB shared one young disabled person’s experience: “A careers officer told me that I should go to Tech because university wasn’t for, and this is a quote, ‘for people like me’. I was fuming!! It’s just sort of fuelled me to go and prove them wrong!”¹⁰⁵ That young person went on to complete a Masters-level qualification.¹⁰⁶

67. Another critical factor in enabling young disabled people to develop their ambitions and believe that they can succeed is the presence of role models in the education system. The importance of disabled role models was highlighted by several contributors,¹⁰⁷ who urged for increased numbers of disabled teachers¹⁰⁸ and careers advisers,¹⁰⁹ and for much greater representation of disabled people in the workplace.¹¹⁰ The young disabled people who spoke to us stressed that role models needed to be present “as early as possible”¹¹¹—from nursery onwards.
68. **Because of the greater barriers they face to accessing employment, and their need for a deeper understanding of the kinds of support employees can access, young disabled people are particularly likely to benefit from targeted, specialist careers advice. It is deeply concerning that this specialist advice is not available to all.**

Further Education and young disabled people

69. There is a higher proportion of young disabled people in further education than in schools, with the Association of Colleges noting that those with SEN make up “17.3% of school pupils compared with 28.0% of college students funded under 16-19 funding”.¹¹² As noted by David Holloway, young disabled people may arrive at college “at different stages of their own development”¹¹³ and may be pursuing vocational qualifications, academic qualifications such as A Levels, or be studying for maths and English GCSEs if they have not already attained them.
70. However, colleges may struggle to meet the needs of young disabled people who require support. David Holloway suggested that staffing and funding issues put colleges in an “impossible situation” where they were unable

102 Written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) (YDP0063)

103 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

104 *Ibid.*

105 Written evidence from RNIB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (YDP0028)

106 RNIB Northern Ireland et al, *Eye work with you too* (Undated): https://media.rnib.org.uk/documents/APDF-RE221018_NI_Communities_Funding_Report-v01.pdf [accessed 23 September 2024]

107 Written evidence from Dr CJP Lee (YDP0019); Ambitious About Autism (YDP0026); NAHT (YDP0036), and Dr Stella Chatzitheochari and Dr Angharad Butler Rees (YDP0045)

108 Written evidence from Shaw Trust (YDP0027)

109 Q 64 (Peter Monaghan)

110 Q 163 (Heather Hall)

111 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

112 Written evidence from Association of Colleges (YDP0041)

113 Q 123 (David Holloway)

to meet the requirements of learners' EHCPs.¹¹⁴ When considering staff remuneration, David Holloway reported that college teachers earn more than £9,000 per year less than their counterparts in schools, leading to recruitment and retention issues.¹¹⁵

Further Education curricula and qualifications

71. We heard a range of concerns about the curricula available to young disabled people in colleges. The Association of Colleges told us that many young disabled people retake Level 2 (GCSE) maths and English qualifications several times while in Further Education and argued that “this means that students are taking repeated and demotivating re-sits of an exam which did not meet their needs in the first place.”¹¹⁶ Gary Hyndman, the principal of Sense College Loughborough, an independent specialist college, stated that, at the college: “we find ourselves scrimping around for qualifications”,¹¹⁷ noting that young disabled people at his school may be learning skills and working towards aspirational targets, including in English and maths, but that such targets may not be recognised by formal qualifications.¹¹⁸
72. We also heard concerns that young people were attending and completing a range of courses without this leading to work.¹¹⁹ We heard of some cases of colleges offering ‘employability’ focused courses that were: “often not meaningful, with no evidence that they led to ... employment. Young people often leave these courses with certificates that mean nothing in the world of work and are not ... matched to the labour skills needed across the UK.”¹²⁰ Such courses may not deliver positive employment outcomes for young disabled people and may not be delivered by teachers trained to support young disabled people into jobs.¹²¹ This concern was also raised with the Committee by young disabled people and their parents.¹²²
73. Dr Crossley felt that this was not a widespread problem as any providers: “creating low-quality qualifications will be penalised through performance tables and Ofsted”.¹²³ But she argued that the fact that: “providers feel the need to create something additional ... further supports the view that the offer is not right for all [of those with] SEND.”¹²⁴
74. ***The Government’s review of post-16 qualifications reform must take into account the employment outcomes, qualifications and assessments open to young disabled people.***

BTECs and the transition to T Levels

75. In addition to gaining experience in the workplace, many students gain valuable work-related skills through vocational courses such as T Levels or

114 [Q 124](#) (David Holloway)

115 *Ibid.*

116 Written evidence from Association of Colleges (AoC) ([YDP0041](#))

117 [Q 130](#) (Gary Hyndman)

118 *Ibid.*

119 [Q 124](#) (Ellen Atkinson)

120 Written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#)); see also [Q 60](#) (Peter Monaghan).

121 Written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#))

122 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

123 Written evidence from Dr Nicola Crossley ([YDP0071](#))

124 *Ibid.*

BTECs, both in further education colleges and in schools. BTECs¹²⁵ are “specialist work related qualifications” at Level 2 and Level 3,¹²⁶ while T Levels are “2-year courses which are taken after GCSEs and are broadly equivalent in size to 3 A Levels” and include an industry placement.¹²⁷ The introduction of T Levels from September 2020 means that many other level 3 qualifications (such as BTECs) that overlap with T Levels are expected to be defunded.¹²⁸

76. We heard praise for both T Levels¹²⁹ and BTECs¹³⁰ but Ellen Atkinson, Regional Adviser–South and South-East for the National Development Team for Inclusion, told us that BTECs “gave young people with additional needs more opportunity to achieve at various levels”, whereas the “higher entry level” for T Levels put the qualification “beyond their reach in many cases”.¹³¹ Assessment for T Levels includes both practical assessment and end-of-course written assessments, which Gary Hyndman argued would disadvantage young disabled people who do not perform well in exams “if those young people fail courses ... they fail on the written and assessed elements of the course.”¹³² There were also concerns that T Levels may make it more difficult for young disabled people to access wider work experience placements due to employers receiving payments for taking T Level students, but not for students studying other qualifications.¹³³
77. DfE’s impact assessment for these changes to post-16 qualifications, published in July 2022, recognised that “those with learning difficulties or disabilities were more likely to be affected ... [and] that in some cases some students may be disadvantaged”¹³⁴ but judged the overall benefits to the general student population to outweigh these risks.¹³⁵ DfE told us that “a range of qualifications” would be available at entry level and levels 1–3. They also argued that the “move to a linear exams system”¹³⁶ [would] encourage deeper subject understanding and readiness for further study”.¹³⁷
78. In July 2024, the new Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, stated that DfE would “undertake a short pause and review of post-16 qualifications reform at level 3 and below, concluding before the end of the year. This means that the defunding scheduled for [August 2024] will be paused”.¹³⁸ She also stated that there would be “further developments

125 Named after the body that first oversaw the qualification, the Business and Technology Education Council

126 UCAS, ‘What is a BTEC diploma?’: <https://www.ucas.com/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/btec-diplomas> [accessed 12 July 2024]

127 Department for Education, ‘Introduction of T Levels (9 March 2023)’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels> [accessed 12 July 2024]

128 Department for Education, ‘Wave 4 T levels: overlapping qualifications (30 January 2024)’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wave-4-t-levels-overlapping-qualifications> [accessed 12 July 2024]

129 [Q 128](#) (David Holloway)

130 [Q 128](#) (Gary Hyndman)

131 [Q 129](#) (Ellen Atkinson)

132 [Q 129](#) (Gary Hyndman, Ellen Atkinson)

133 [Q 119](#) (Laura Davis)

134 Department for Education, *Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England* (July 2022) : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62d587f7e90e071e7488391e/Revised_Review_of_post-16_qualifications_at_level_3_in_England_impact_assessment.pdf [accessed 12 July 2024]

135 *Ibid.*

136 Meaning a system with assessments at the end of the course, rather than assessments throughout the course through modular exams or coursework.

137 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0077](#))

138 HC Deb 24 July 2024, [col 697](#)

in the roll-out of new T-levels”.¹³⁹ The Association of Colleges welcomed this decision, stating “pausing defunding and undertaking a rapid review... is exactly what we asked for”.¹⁴⁰ However, the Sixth Form Colleges Association argued the statement was “misleading” as it “only applies to a small number” of qualifications that would be defunded in August 2024, not to the much larger number due to be defunded in 2025 and 2026.¹⁴¹

79. **The introduction of T Levels offers opportunities for young disabled people to gain valuable workplace experience and skills. There is a risk, however, that it will prevent some from progressing in further education through other routes. For those unable to access T Levels, BTECs are the ideal alternative, and it is concerning that these are being discontinued even though the impact on young disabled people is acknowledged and recognised. We welcome the Government’s decision to pause the defunding of qualifications in August 2024 and to conduct a rapid review of post-16 qualifications reform.**
80. *The Government’s review of post-16 qualifications reform must consider and prioritise the impact that reforms will have on young disabled people. The Government must commit to retaining all extant BTEC courses at least until there has been a full evaluation of the impact of the introduction of T Levels both generally and specifically on young disabled people. Even if the ultimate decision is to discontinue support for BTECs, this support must continue until alternative level 2 and level 3 qualifications suitable for young disabled people have been fully developed.*

Bridging the gap between education and work

81. Throughout the inquiry we heard about a number of effective ways in which young disabled people can gain experience of the workplace that would support them to move into permanent work. However, there are significant barriers to accessing these opportunities.

Work experience

82. ThinkForward argued that “exposure to workplaces encourage young people to develop their career goals and work readiness skills” while also enabling parents “to support their young people to continue to pursue employment opportunities”.¹⁴² Similarly, disabled academic Dr Gayle Brewer emphasised the value of work experience for university students.¹⁴³ However, young disabled people may struggle to access work experience that is “individually matched to the young person’s aspirations, talents and needs”.¹⁴⁴ We heard that access to work experience was “dependent on the proactive approach of

139 *Ibid.*

140 Association of Colleges, ‘The government announcement on pause and review is the right decision, says AoC’ (24 July 2024): <https://www.aoc.co.uk/news-campaigns-parliament/aoc-newsroom/the-government-announcement-on-pause-and-review-is-the-right-decision-says-aoc> [accessed 23 September 2023]

141 Sixth Form Colleges Association, ‘Government reneges on promise to pause and review BTEC cull, SFCA responds’: <https://www.sixthformcolleges.org/380/news-and-comment/post/57/government-reneges-on-promise-to-pause-and-review-btec-cull-sfca-responds> [accessed 26 July 2024]

142 Written evidence from ThinkForward (YDP0076)

143 Written evidence from Gayle Brewer (YDP0008)

144 Q 18 Stephen Beyer

individual schools”¹⁴⁵ and that “many students leave college in their early to mid-twenties with no work experience whatsoever.”¹⁴⁶

83. One of the barriers to accessing work experience is the attitude of employers. Dr Crossley told us that “employers are sometimes fearful about what it means” and what measures they need to put in place.¹⁴⁷ Peter Monaghan, Head of SEND and High Needs Curriculum for Education Partnership North East, stated that “there is not enough support for employers.”¹⁴⁸
84. We did, however, hear of examples of good practice and opportunities for further development. Mr Monaghan told us how a college had developed free training for employers that “talked about supporting young disabled people in the workplace”, including the language to use and how to make reasonable adjustments.¹⁴⁹ Dr Anne Murdoch, Senior Adviser for College Leaders for ASCL, argued for the development of inclusive work experience placements through local skills improvement development plans and employer groups such as Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.¹⁵⁰
85. Written evidence from DfE stated that careers leaders in schools should identify the needs of pupils with SEN and put personalised support in place. This can include informing young people about relevant types of support, reasonable adjustments, and employment and education opportunities.¹⁵¹
86. In its manifesto for the 2024 General Election, the current Government undertakes to guarantee two weeks of work experience for every young person and to improve careers advice in schools and colleges.¹⁵²
87. **We welcome the Government’s commitment to providing every young person with two weeks’ work experience.**
88. ***The Government must ensure that young disabled people are given equal access to work experience and must work with DWP, schools, and local government bodies to address the barriers to access to work experience for young disabled people identified in this chapter. This should include introducing further incentives for schools and colleges to develop work experience opportunities, taking steps to improve support for employers offering work experience, and supporting and incentivising local bodies such as Chambers of Commerce to encourage businesses to offer work experience opportunities. We ask the Government to provide an update to us on progress in this area by March 2025.***

Supported internships

89. Chapter 2 outlined the ways in which supported internships can be effective and lead to permanent employment for young disabled people.¹⁵³ Several

145 [Q 67](#) (Dr Nicola Crossley)

146 Written evidence from Careers England ([YDP0024](#)); see also [Q 124](#) (Ellen Atkinson), and written evidence Dr Rachel Moseley ([YDP0006](#)), and Gayle Brewer ([YDP0008](#)).

147 [Q 62](#) (Dr Nicola Crossley)

148 [Q 60](#) (Peter Monaghan)

149 [Q 66](#) (Peter Monaghan)

150 [Q 67](#) (Anne Murdoch)

151 Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0002](#))

152 The Labour Party, *Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024* (June 2024) pp 43–44: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf> [accessed 12 July 2024]

153 See Chapter 2, paras 30–36

witnesses also noted the effectiveness of supported internships.¹⁵⁴ DfE stated that “high quality providers” reported success rates of 60–70 per cent in 2020–21¹⁵⁵ and the Department committed to increasing the number of supported internships available to 5,000 by March 2025. In April 2024, the Department informed the Committee that it was on track to meet this target, with 3,250 young disabled people undertaking supported internships in 2023–24.¹⁵⁶

90. However, a criticism of supported internships as they currently operate is that they are only available to young people with EHCPs,¹⁵⁷ which can be challenging to obtain.¹⁵⁸ The Government has begun trialling supported internships for people without EHCPs, planning to support 250 young disabled people across 12 local authorities. It expected evaluation of this pilot to be completed in “early 2026”. DfE emphasised that “supported internships must be for young people who need the high level of support the programme provides.”¹⁵⁹
91. **We welcome the roll-out of supported internships and the Government’s efforts to widen eligibility for them.**
92. ***The Government should continue to take steps to widen eligibility for supported internships beyond those with Education, Health and Care Plans while ensuring that supported internships are targeted at those who need a high level of support.***

Apprenticeships

93. The Government has committed to increasing the number of apprenticeships available to young disabled people and to ensuring they achieve good outcomes.¹⁶⁰ To this end, DfE has “introduced flexibilities to English and maths requirements” for apprenticeships for people with EHCPs.¹⁶¹
94. As part of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, in 2023 the previous Government conducted a pilot widening the eligibility for apprenticeships with lower English and maths requirements to disabled people who do not have EHCPs.¹⁶² Following this pilot, the rules for flexibility on maths and English requirements were updated, allowing apprenticeship providers to determine whether an apprentice is eligible for this flexibility “by undertaking a thorough and evidence based assessment of their learning difficulty or disability”, from 1 August 2024.¹⁶³ In addition, there is funding for apprenticeship providers to make reasonable adjustments.¹⁶⁴ and DfE also supports the Disabled Apprentice Network, operated by Disability

154 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0002](#)) see also [Q 24](#) (Kim Hoque), and written evidence from YEG Disability Subgroup ([YDP0050](#)); DFN Project SEARCH ([YDP0043](#)), and Career Connect ([YDP0034](#)).

155 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0062](#))

156 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0077](#))

157 See para 51 above.

158 See para 52 above.

159 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0077](#))

160 HM Government, *National Disability Strategy*, CP 512 (2 December 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy> [accessed 12 July 2024]

161 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0062](#))

162 *Ibid.*

163 Department for Education, *Apprenticeship funding rules August 2024 to July 2025* (May 2024): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/664620c4993111924d9d36ad/Apprenticeship_Funding_Rules_2024-2025_version_1.pdf [accessed 12 July 2024]

164 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0062](#))

Rights UK, which provides the opportunity for apprentices with disabilities to share experiences and support each other.¹⁶⁵

95. The proportion of apprentices declaring that they have a disability increased from 12.4 per cent in 2020–21 to 14 per cent in 2021–22.¹⁶⁶ However, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said that “learners with a disability or long-term health condition are one of the groups most likely to withdraw from their apprenticeship.”¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the overall number of apprenticeship opportunities has fallen.¹⁶⁸ The number of apprenticeships starts has dropped from 393,400 in 2018–19 to 200,550 in 2022–23.¹⁶⁹
96. BASE stated that the apprenticeships with greater flexibility in eligibility criteria and level of support (designed for disabled people) should not be dependent purely on “having an EHCP”. Instead, they recommended that the criteria for these more flexible apprenticeships should be changed “to ensure the right young person can access the right employment pathway”.¹⁷⁰ Witnesses also suggested that employers may not be aware of “the more flexible criteria”¹⁷¹ and that training providers take “an inordinately long time”¹⁷² to accept that someone is eligible for an apprenticeship, leading to disabled young people missing out on apprenticeships.
97. **We welcome the steps taken to make apprenticeships more accessible to young disabled people, including those without an EHCP, and the commitment to nurturing peer support and learning through the Disabled Apprentice Network.**
98. *We welcome the Government’s steps to make flexibilities around maths and English requirements accessible to people without an Education, Health and Care Plan. The Government should launch a campaign to clearly communicate the new criteria, promote apprenticeships to employers and training providers and incentivise employers to take on disabled apprentices, and should monitor the number of young disabled people starting apprenticeships due to these changes in eligibility criteria.*

Disabled people’s experience in Higher Education

99. Several of the young disabled people that we spoke to argued that they had had a far more positive experience, and better support, in university than in school, college, or work.¹⁷³ This was not, however, a universal experience, with some young disabled people recalling the inaccessibility of university premises or accommodation, and university support services not being able to provide specialised support to disabled students.¹⁷⁴

165 *Ibid.*

166 *Ibid.*

167 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

168 [Q 22](#) (Kim Hoque), see also written evidence from Careers England ([YDP0024](#)).

169 Department for Education, ‘Apprenticeships Academic Year 2023/24’ (13 June 2024): <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships> [accessed 12 July 2024]

170 Written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#))

171 [Q 22](#) (Kim Hoque)

172 [Q 22](#) (Stephen Beyer)

173 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

174 *Ibid.*

100. The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) noted that, in England “disabled students are more likely to drop out of university, have lower degree results and worse employment outcomes than their nondisabled peers.”¹⁷⁵ UCAS reported “a clear under-representation”¹⁷⁶ of disabled people in higher education and that in 2022 disabled people were 32 per cent more likely to defer entry to higher education than their non-disabled peers “due to a lack of... support and adjustments.”¹⁷⁷ TASO also argued that there was “a lack of quality evidence” on the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments in higher education, and on the move from higher education to the workplace.¹⁷⁸ Dr Gemma McKenna, an Assistant Professor at the University of Birmingham, cited research that found that “only 20% of students registered in UK HE institutions disclose” their disabilities¹⁷⁹, which would suggest the number of students with disabilities may be underreported.¹⁸⁰
101. ***Working with the Office for Students, the Government should review the provision and quality of accessibility information provided by universities to students. This should include physical accessibility of spaces, adjustments available to students and previous examples of how adjustments have been implemented, considering the views of disabled students and academics. This review should identify actions for the Government, the Office for Students and universities to take, and should be published before March 2026.***

175 Written evidence from TASO ([YDP0040](#)), referencing Department for Work and Pensions, ‘Employment of Disabled People 2022’ (26 January 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2022/employment-of-disabled-people-2022> [accessed 12 July 2024]. See also [Q 60](#) (Dr Nicola Crossley).

176 According to UCAS, one in five working-age adults in the UK are disabled, compared to one in six students in higher education. Written evidence from UCAS ([YDP0046](#))

177 Written evidence from UCAS ([YDP0046](#))

178 Written evidence from TASO ([YDP0040](#))

179 Written evidence from Dr Gemma McKenna ([YDP0009](#))

180 Written evidence from UCAS ([YDP0046](#))

CHAPTER 4: ENTERING THE WORKFORCE: THE ROLE OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES

102. We turn now from the role of the education system to that of the employment support system. This is a significant transition for many young disabled people as they move from the purview of DfE and the local authority to that of DWP. We explore the various national programmes that support disabled people moving into work and how effective they are, and examine newer ‘supported employment’ approaches to helping disabled people to access and remain in work.

National Careers Service

103. The National Careers Service (NCS) is sponsored by DfE and provides free and impartial careers advice, information, and guidance to anyone aged 13 or older. Individuals can access support from NCS via its website, webchat, and phone service. Those aged 19 (or 18 if they have been referred by Jobcentre Plus) are also eligible for face-to-face advice. The previous government stated that “young people aged 19–24 with SEND in need of transition support are a National Careers Service priority group”.¹⁸¹

104. Unison and the Careers Development Institute (CDI) suggested such support was often “self-serve”¹⁸² and lacked flexible provisions,¹⁸³ arguing that this presented “a barrier to young disabled people in need of transitional support.”¹⁸⁴ Careers England argued that the “payment by results” funding model limits the amount of time spent supporting people,¹⁸⁵ which we heard can lead to retention issues.¹⁸⁶

Jobcentre Plus

105. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is often the first service a young disabled person engages with once they leave education and it is where they first learn about employment support schemes.¹⁸⁷ JCPs employ Work Coaches, who support Universal Credit claimants by helping them to find, and stay in, work. However, contributors questioned the efficacy of JCP support.

106. Dr Rachel Moseley, principal academic in Psychology at Bournemouth University, noted that autistic people had been extremely critical of JCP’s understanding of autism and had reported “highly distressing and invalidating encounters.”¹⁸⁸ Sense argued that “disabled people often do not get the support they need from Work Coaches”, reporting that a third of 18–25 year olds with complex disabilities¹⁸⁹ did not feel supported by Work Coaches, and that Work Coaches’ initial training did not include specific training about disability.¹⁹⁰ Career Connect argued that it can be difficult for

181 Written evidence from Department for Education (DfE) ([YDP0062](#))

182 Written evidence from the Career Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#))

183 Written evidence from Unison ([YDP0068](#))

184 Written evidence from Career Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#))

185 Written evidence from Careers England ([YDP0024](#))

186 [Q 103](#) (David Morgan)

187 Written evidence from Shaw Trust ([YDP0027](#))

188 Written evidence from Dr Rachel Moseley ([YDP0006](#)) and Sense ([YDP0037](#))

189 Sense defines those with ‘complex disabilities’ as having two or more of the following conditions and reporting that their life is impacted by their disabilities: sight loss, hearing loss, autism, learning disability.

190 Written evidence from Sense ([YDP0037](#))

young people to “access and form relationships” with JCP staff and that “it can be difficult for young people to find the path to the appropriate support”.¹⁹¹

107. Amy Little, Head of Advocacy at Leonard Cheshire, suggested that reasonable adjustments were not guaranteed for those attending JCP meetings, adding a further barrier to obtaining support.¹⁹² Sense found that no JCPs were equipped with specialist assistive technology.¹⁹³ This means that some disabled people are unable to use the computers at JCPs to look for work, and may be unable to do so at home due to not being able to afford the technology.¹⁹⁴
108. Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) are also employed by JCPs. They are expected to be expert at supporting disabled people into work, and train Work Coaches, link JCP staff with local organisations, and promote Government schemes such as Access to Work¹⁹⁵ and Disability Confident.¹⁹⁶ In April 2024, the then Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Mims Davies MP told the Committee that there were “about 750 Disability Employment Advisers”.¹⁹⁷ As of 29 April 2024 there were 634 JCPs across Great Britain,¹⁹⁸ meaning that each JCP may be able to access 1–2 DEAs.
109. Leonard Cheshire was positive about the introduction of DEAs.¹⁹⁹ However, we also heard that “lots of young people are not even aware of what a Disability Employment Adviser is.”²⁰⁰ Sense reported that “a third of 18–24-year-olds with complex disabilities did not feel supported” by DEAs and argued that there were “clear gaps in what [DEAs] are taught. They do not, for example receive any specific training on assistive technology.”²⁰¹
110. In its manifesto for the 2024 General Election, the current Government committed to bringing “Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service together to provide a national jobs and careers service, focused on getting people into work and helping them get on at work.”²⁰²
111. **The joining together of Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service to create a national jobs and careers service presents an opportunity to ensure these services are delivering high-quality, tailored, joined-up advice for young disabled people.**
112. *In the process of establishing the proposed national jobs and careers service, the Government should introduce further training for*

191 Written evidence from Career Connect ([YDP0034](#))

192 [Q 51](#) (Amy Little)

193 Guide Dogs for the Blind Association describes assistive technology as “devices, software, or tools that help a person with disabilities to overcome barriers and challenges and help accomplish tasks more independently... These can include things like mobility aids, communication devices and adaptive equipment”. Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, “Technology for vision impairment”: <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/getting-support/information-and-advice/how-can-technology-help-me/> [accessed 15 July 2024]. Assistive technology can include tools such as screen readers, glasses or wheelchairs.

194 Written evidence from Sense ([YDP0037](#))

195 See paras 114 below.

196 See Chapter 7 para 177.

197 [Q 182](#) (Mims Davies MP). This is a significant increase from the 450 DEAs in post in 2018, but is fewer than the 870 practicing in 2021. See: HC Deb, 23 November 2022, [UN94811](#) Session 2022–23

198 HC Deb 19 April 2024, [UIN22700](#) Session 2023–24

199 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire ([YDP0033](#))

200 [Q 114](#) (Henry Foulkes)

201 Written evidence from Sense ([YDP0037](#))

202 The Labour Party, *Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024* (June 2024), pp 42–43: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2024]

Work Coaches and DEAs to ensure they are fully able to understand the specific barriers young disabled people face, including in the commissioning and use of assistive technologies. New training should be in place before March 2025.

113. ***The Government should take steps to ensure that employment support services such as Jobcentre Plus and National Career Service facilities are fully accessible for disabled people, including for those who require reasonable adjustments or assistive technology to search for work.***

Access to Work

114. Access to Work is a Government programme that provides a grant for disabled people moving into work or retraining for employment. It can be used to cover costs related to disability and work which go beyond ‘reasonable adjustments’²⁰³, to a maximum value of £66,000 per year.²⁰⁴ Disability charities stressed the value of the Access to Work programme in providing “crucial support” to young disabled people,²⁰⁵ but witnesses also highlighted a number of problems with the programme.
115. A key issue for Access to Work applicants is the length of time the process takes.²⁰⁶ We heard of delays of up to a year between the application for support and the receipt of a report setting out the adjustments needed.²⁰⁷ Evidence from Leonard Cheshire stated that “61% of disabled people have said that it took over three months for their application to be processed and for 1 in 5 (20%) it took over six months”²⁰⁸
116. Angela Matthews Head of Policy and Research for the Business Disability Forum stated that delays can lead to “young disabled people ... having their interviews withdrawn because the Access to Work applications are not going through quickly enough ... [and employers] declining interviews for applicants who cannot get adjustments done from Access to Work in time”.²⁰⁹ Disabled people are often in insecure roles,²¹⁰ and Dr Brewer argued that these delays can make it impossible for “accommodations to be implemented in sufficient time for a temporary contract”²¹¹. In addition, Leonard Cheshire told us that the information available to Access to Work advisers is sometimes out of date, meaning that they do not always consider accessible technology that can be used on standard devices, recommending instead the purchase of technology that is not compatible with the employers’ systems.²¹²
117. Those that are able to access appropriate support through Access to Work may then find themselves facing another problem when they come to move jobs: they are frequently unable to transfer the support to their new employer. Guide Dogs for the Blind described how assistive technology for blind people

203 See Chapter 5 para 137.

204 Written evidence from DWP ([YDP0055](#))

205 For example, [Q 177](#) (Angela Matthews) and written evidence from Shaw Trust ([YDP0027](#)) and Autistica ([YDP0020](#)).

206 [Q 177](#) (Angela Matthews) and written evidence from RNIB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People ([YDP0028](#))

207 [Q 177](#) (Angela Matthews)

208 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire ([YDP0033](#))

209 [Q 177](#) (Angela Matthews)

210 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

211 Written evidence from Gayle Brewer ([YDP0008](#))

212 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire ([YDP0033](#))

“such as adapted laptops, screens or audio equipment ... is often owned by an employer and isn’t transferable between jobs.”²¹³ However, Lorraine Jackson, Director of the Joint Work and Health Directorate in DWP and DHSC, saw the ability of employers to retain the equipment or the adjustment as a good thing, “because they are able to employ or support another person”.²¹⁴

118. In addition to these issues with the programme as it currently operates, a further impediment is that awareness of Access to Work is low among young disabled people and many “only become aware ... after entering full time employment.”²¹⁵ Lynne Turnbull, Chief Executive Officer of Disability Positive, a Disabled People’s Organisation whose services include support for employers, described Access to Work as a “best kept secret”,²¹⁶ and others noted that this lack of awareness also affects employers.²¹⁷ Countering this view, Ms Jackson reported that there had been “a marked increase” in the number of younger disabled people applying for Access to Work.²¹⁸
119. In its manifesto for the 2024 General Election, the current Government promised to “tackle the backlog of Access to Work claims”²¹⁹.
120. **The Access to Work programme has the potential to be transformational in supporting young disabled people to access and remain in work but its potential is not being realised. Poor awareness of the scheme, and delays in processing applications, are preventing it from supporting as many disabled people as it could. We, therefore, welcome the new Government’s commitment to reducing the delays in application process.**
121. *We ask the Government to provide the Committee with regular updates on progress with reducing the Access to Work application backlog and cutting application times, starting in March 2025.*

Supported employment approaches

122. Supported employment is a five-step model used to support people into work, sometimes referred to as the place, train and maintain model. The model focuses on matching the individual’s aspirations and skills to a role, working with employers to create or amend roles to match the individual’s profile. The employers and the supported employment provider then support the individual to learn their jobs while in work, and ensure appropriate adjustments are put in place for the individual to flourish.²²⁰ Examples of supported employment programmes include supported internships²²¹ and IPS.²²²

213 Written evidence from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association ([YDP0053](#))

214 [Q 185](#) (Lorraine Jackson)

215 Written evidence from Dr Stella Chatzitheochari and Dr Angharad Butler-Rees ([YDP0045](#)). See also [Q 44](#) (Amy Little, Bethany Bale) .

216 [Q 44](#) (Lynne Turnbull). See also [Q 49](#) (Amy Little); and written evidence from Hft ([YDP0013](#)); Chloe Plummer ([YDP0016](#)), and Career Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#)).

217 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire ([YDP0033](#)); Career Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#)), and Dr Charlotte Pearson, Prof Janice McLaughlin et al ([YDP0029](#))

218 [Q 178](#) (Lorraine Jackson)

219 The Labour Party, *Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024* (June 2024), p 43: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2024]

220 British Association for Supported Employment (Base), ‘What is Supported Employment?’: <https://www.base-uk.org/what-supported-employment> [accessed 15 July 2024]

221 See Chapters 2 and 3.

222 See Chapter 2 para 42.

123. Academics, local authority leads and supported employment providers argued that supported employment approaches were well evidenced and effective,²²³ achieving “consistently better outcomes” than other types of employment programmes.²²⁴ BASE also argued that there is a strong costs/benefit case for the schemes, and that investment in supported employment programmes would bring savings to local government and NHS trusts, and increase tax returns, while also supporting disabled people to live independently. Assessments of locally delivered supported employment schemes have shown they can deliver £1.17 for every £1 invested.²²⁵
124. Access to supported employment programmes is dependent on whether the local authority commissions them and the availability of relevant partners—there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide supported employment programmes.²²⁶ This presents a significant barrier for young disabled people, with several witnesses stating that access to supported employment is a “postcode lottery”.²²⁷ Overall, Dr Stephen Beyer, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Cardiff’s National Centre for Mental Health told us, “job coach supported employment ... is not available in anywhere like the numbers needed to cope with demand.”²²⁸

Universal Support

125. The Universal Support programme was launched on 13 September 2023, and is gradually being rolled out. DWP states that it is a “voluntary programme designed to support disabled people ... into sustained employment” using a supported employment approach.²²⁹ The programme is “grant funded and delivered by local authorities”.²³⁰ BASE welcomed the Government’s Universal Support programme saying it “has the Supported Employment model at the heart”²³¹ and “will support 100,000 participants each year” once fully rolled out.²³²
126. Laura Davis, Chief Executive of the British Association for Supported Employment and Inclusive Trading CIC (BASE) suggested that there was an opportunity to link supported internships²³³ with Universal Support. She recommended that, at the later stages of a supported internship, the 30 per cent of participants who were not likely to move into work could be moved onto Universal Support to ensure a “seamless journey out of education and

223 [Q 18,24,26](#) (Stephen Beyer), see also [Q 123,127,131](#) (Ellen Atkinson); [Q 150](#) (Suzanne Davis), and written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#)), and DFN Project SEARCH ([YDP0043](#))

224 Written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#)), and DFN Project SEARCH ([YDP0043](#))

225 British Association for Supported Employment (BASE), ‘The Cost/Benefit Argument’: <https://www.base-uk.org/costbenefit-argument> [accessed 15 July 2024]

226 [Q 110](#) (Laura Davis)

227 Written evidence from Youth Employment Group ([YDP0050](#)) and British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#))

228 [Q 18](#) (Stephen Beyer)

229 Written evidence from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ([YDP0075](#))

230 *Ibid.*

231 Written evidence from British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#))

232 Written evidence from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ([YDP0075](#)). At the launch of the scheme, the Government committed to supporting 25,000 people in 2024, increasing to 50,000 in 2025/26. DWP, ‘25,000 people to be helped into work as government ramps up roll out of flagship universal support scheme (13 September 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/25-000-people-to-be-helped-into-work-as-government-ramps-up-roll-out-of-flagship-universal-support-scheme> [accessed 15 July 2024]

233 See Chapter 2 para 29 and Chapter 3 para 89.

into employment support” while they were still in their internship.²³⁴ This would prevent them dropping out of work at the end of their internship.

127. **Supported employment provides an effective way to support people to access and remain in work and can deliver value for money investment. The Universal Support programme has the potential to increase availability of supported employment programmes. It is essential that the Government continues introducing and rolling out Universal Support and we hope that the Government will move quickly to allay concerns within the sector that they are not committed to the programme.**
128. *The Government should set out clear timelines and targets for improving the regional and national availability of Universal Support, as well as metrics focused on employment outcomes for the disabled people who participate in supported employment programmes.*
129. *As part of the rollout of Universal Support, the Government should take steps to link Universal Support offers to supported internships to ensure that young disabled people with the highest needs do not drop out of work at the end of their internship. We ask the Government to update the Committee on progress of the rollout by March 2025.*

CHAPTER 5: GOING TO WORK: OVERCOMING DISCRIMINATION AND SECURING RIGHTS

130. Even where young disabled people have had all the support they need at school and university and have the skills required to enter the workforce, they still need to secure a job and get the equipment and resources they need to succeed in the workplace. Our witnesses told us just how challenging this can be.

Discrimination

131. Many different witnesses highlighted discrimination in the workplace. In the words of the Trades Union Congress, “young disabled workers face disadvantages and discrimination at all stages of their employment journey.”²³⁵ Amy Little Head of Advocacy at Leonard Cheshire stated that one in five employers, “told us that they would be less likely to hire a disabled person.”²³⁶ Deirdre Costigan, Unison’s National Officer for Disability Equality, told us that “discrimination is the number one issue that young people face in entering the workplace.”²³⁷ Scope reported that “34% of working age disabled people ... had experienced discrimination from either their line manager or a colleague”²³⁸ and the EHRC told us that disability discrimination is “the most prevalent form of discrimination in claims made to Acas and employment tribunals”.²³⁹
132. Even where there is no active or overt discrimination, several contributors noted that the fundamental view of disabled people in the workplace was “deficit focused”²⁴⁰ with a greater “emphasis on what a person can’t do than what they can do.”²⁴¹ One participant in our engagement events memorably recounted being asked “why should I hire a disabled person to do half a job when I can hire a non-disabled person to do a full job?”²⁴²
133. HfT, a charity that supports people with learning disabilities, told us that an additional concern for some employers was whether disabled employees “would be mistreated by other employees”.²⁴³ As Dr Brewer told us, “disabled employees ... are more likely to experience discrimination, bullying and harassment than non-disabled colleagues”,²⁴⁴ and Scope noted that these experiences played a significant part in disabled people’s decisions to leave the workplace.²⁴⁵ Moreover, we were told that some employers, far from acting to prevent such behaviour, tended to lay the blame for such mistreatment on the disabled employee without “considering the behaviour of other staff

235 Written evidence from Trades Union Congress (TUC) ([YDP0048](#))

236 [Q 47](#)(Amy Little) see also written evidence from Hft ([YDP0013](#)).

237 [Q 29](#) (Deirdre Costigan). It should be noted that in the 2024 general election Deirdre Costigan was elected as a Labour MP for Ealing Southall.

238 Written evidence from Scope ([YDP0061](#))

239 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

240 Written evidence from Dr Rachel Moseley ([YDP0006](#))—specifically regarding public narratives around autism.

241 Written evidence from Disability Positive ([YDP0022](#))

242 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

243 Written evidence from Hft ([YDP0013](#))

244 Written evidence from Gayle Brewer ([YDP0008](#))

245 Written evidence from Scope ([YDP0061](#))

or contextual workplace factors, like lack of support”.²⁴⁶ These issues and perceptions, along with concerns about the perceived cost and difficulty of making workplace adjustments, mean that many employers decide simply not to employ a disabled person rather than learn how to do so.²⁴⁷

134. We heard that such discrimination can also be seen in recruitment processes,²⁴⁸ and that disabled people may not be able to access interviews or information about them due to inaccessible formats, locations and websites.²⁴⁹ Young disabled people told the Committee that they had been routinely advised not to tell prospective employers that they had a disability during recruitment processes to avoid discrimination.²⁵⁰ One said she deliberately waited until the interview stage to let recruiters know that she was a wheelchair user as this was “the only way that I can get a chance”. She remarked that interviewers tended to respond more positively “when you are a person in front of them.”²⁵¹
135. **Despite the introduction of disability discrimination legislation over the past 30 years, disabled people still face discrimination in the workplace and significant numbers of employers hold discriminatory views. For disabled people to access, remain and thrive in work, this must end.**

Workplace rights

136. Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The Act means that it is against the law for employers to discriminate on the grounds of disability at all stages of employment, from initial application to termination and beyond. Applicants and employees are protected from discrimination under the Act if the employer knows or could reasonably be expected to know the employee has a disability.²⁵² This right is asymmetrical, meaning that it is not unlawful “to treat disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people”²⁵³ because doing so does not disadvantage non-disabled people.

Reasonable Adjustments

137. One of the primary duties under the Act for those employing disabled people is to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ for the employee’s disability.²⁵⁴ Reasonable adjustments are changes that “reduce a disadvantage related to

246 Written evidence from Dr Rachel Moseley ([YDP0006](#))—specifically regarding public narratives around autism.

247 Leonard Cheshire, *Still Locked Out* (November 2021): <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Still-Locked-Out.pdf>, [accessed 11 July 2024].

248 [Q 29](#) (Jane Lancaster). See also [Q 34](#) (Deirdre Costigan), and written evidence from Salvation Army ([YDP0031](#)); Autistica ([YDP0020](#)); Prof Dr CJP Lee ([YDP0019](#)); Activity Alliance ([YDP0015](#)), and Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#)).

249 Written evidence from the Snowden Trust ([YDP0039](#)) and Salvation Army ([YDP0031](#)).

250 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>; see also written evidence from Dr Stella Chatzitheochari and Dr Angharad Butler-Rees ([YDP0045](#)); Dr Rachel Moseley ([YDP0006](#)); Dr Gayle Brewer ([YDP0008](#)), and Autistica ([YDP0020](#)).

251 Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>.

252 ACAS, ‘Disability discrimination: The law on disability discrimination’ (11 September 2023): <https://www.acas.org.uk/disability-discrimination> [accessed 11 July 2024].

253 Supplementary written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#)).

254 ACAS, ‘Reasonable adjustments at work: What reasonable adjustments are?’ (1 November 2022): <https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments> [accessed 11 July 2024].

someone's disability."²⁵⁵ 'Reasonable' is not defined in the Act, but Acas states that "employers must consider practicality, affordability, effectiveness, and the impact on the health and safety of others."²⁵⁶ Adjustments can include providing specialist equipment, changing someone's working arrangements, or finding a different way of doing something.

138. Despite this legal backing, the Youth Futures Foundation reported that young disabled people "often felt it was necessary to have to make a lot of noise before [they] were able to receive these adjustments and support".²⁵⁷ Deirdre Costigan told us that "the biggest reason [for refusing adjustments] is the impact it would have on other staff members" due to the perception of it being "unfair" for disabled staff to receive support that non-disabled staff do not.²⁵⁸ This suggests that employers or staff do not understand the asymmetrical nature of the protection afforded by the Act in the case of disability. An additional issue was the lack of any specified timeline for responding to a request for reasonable adjustments, meaning that some requests "were just ignored by management and never got a response".²⁵⁹ She called for the introduction of a two-week deadline for employers to respond to reasonable adjustment requests.
139. **We recognise the need for a clear timeframe for responding to a request for a reasonable adjustment. However, we consider that, taking into account the day-to-day pressures on businesses and employers, four weeks would be a more appropriate deadline than two weeks.**
140. *The Government should introduce a four-week deadline within which employers are obliged to respond to an employee's request for a reasonable adjustment. The Government should explore the means by which compliance with the deadline could be monitored and enforced, both by Government and, where appropriate, by the employee themselves.*

Poor employer awareness of disability rights in the workplace

141. Several witnesses noted a general lack of understanding of the right to reasonable adjustments among employers.²⁶⁰ This may be compounded by the fact that different employers have different interpretations of what constitutes a reasonable adjustment, leading to widespread inconsistency. This view was not, however, universal: David Hale, Head of Policy Affairs at the Federation of Small Businesses, argued that "a vanishingly small number of employers are not aware about what rights disabled people have in the workplace. Nearly every employer will have a decent level of awareness".²⁶¹
142. Scope reported that 53 per cent of employers were "worried their line managers would not be able to understand the challenges faced by disabled people"²⁶² and evidence from a variety of contributors highlighted employers'

255 *Ibid.*

256 *Ibid.*

257 Written evidence from Youth Futures Foundation ([YDP0044](#))

258 [Q 38](#) (Deirdre Costigan)

259 [Q 29](#) (Deirdre Costigan)

260 Written evidence from Unison ([YDP0068](#)); Trades Union Congress (TUC) ([YDP0048](#)); British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#)); Careers Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#)); Career Connect ([YDP0034](#)); see also [Q 38](#) (Jane Lancaster)

261 [Q 178](#) (David Hale)

262 Written evidence from Scope ([YDP0061](#))

“fear of getting it wrong” with a disabled employee.²⁶³ However, Adrian Ashton, a parent of three young disabled people and business consultant with experience in supporting employers with disability issues, argued that, rather than seek more information, employers may instead “elect not to do anything—thus reducing the potential opportunities for young people with a disability”.²⁶⁴

143. **Some employers appear to have a poor understanding of the rights of disabled people in the workplace and how to uphold them.**
144. *Within the next 12 months the Government should launch a campaign aimed at improving attitudes towards disabled people in the workplace. This should be developed in partnership with disabled people and disabled people’s organisations and be targeted at employers.*

263 Written evidence from Salvation Army ([YDP0031](#)); Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ([YDP0055](#)), and Adrian Ashton ([YDP0066](#))

264 Written evidence from Adrian Ashton ([YDP0066](#))

CHAPTER 6: SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES: UPHOLDING WORKPLACE RIGHTS

145. Ensuring that young disabled people are able to enter the workforce and that their rights are upheld requires a clear legal framework, as well as mechanisms to enforce those rights and support for employees to engage effectively with those mechanisms. We heard that, with care and attention, this can work well. But for this to happen, there must be acceptance of the need for culture change within an organisation. At root, this requires a mutually reinforcing partnership between employers and the Government, with each driving improvements and providing constructive challenge. In this chapter, however, we explore the very real barriers that young disabled people can face when seeking to enforce their rights and what is needed to effect the cultural change necessary to remove these barriers.

Enforcement of rights

146. As with all employment rights, there is a clear roadmap for the enforcement of disabled people’s workplace rights. This starts with informal conversations with the employer, progressing to the submission of a formal grievance, undergoing mediation, conciliation and arbitration, and finally making a claim in the employment tribunal.
147. Many witnesses were, however, sceptical about the viability of the existing enforcement mechanisms. Unison argued that only “a very brave young worker” would take their employer to tribunal, describing it as “time-consuming, costly and emotionally draining”.²⁶⁵ Careers England asserted that disabled people’s workplace rights are “not upheld and enforced.”²⁶⁶
148. We heard of a number of factors that made it difficult, if not impossible, for young disabled people to enforce their workplace rights.²⁶⁷ These included the fact that enforcement “relies on the individual disabled person advocating for themselves and pushing for their rights”²⁶⁸ and the challenge of evidencing discrimination,²⁶⁹ particularly during recruitment.²⁷⁰ There were also significant problems with delays—as of March 2024, more than 38,200 employment tribunal cases were outstanding²⁷¹ and it can “take up to two years” for a claim to be decided.²⁷² In addition, there is the fact that tribunal claims can be costly for disabled people,²⁷³ particularly young disabled people,²⁷⁴ with little public funding available. Emergency funding is available in theory but is rarely granted.²⁷⁵ This lack of funding means that claimants are unlikely to be able access representation, meaning that they have to represent themselves at tribunal. Legal experts argued that

265 Written evidence from Unison ([YDP0068](#))

266 Written evidence from Careers England ([YDP0024](#))

267 See chapter 6 for more information on the rights of disabled people in the workplace.

268 [Q 47](#) (Bethany Bale); see also written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#)).

269 [Q 33](#) (Jane Lancaster); see also written evidence from Trades Unions Congress (TUC) ([YDP0048](#)).

270 [Q 55](#) (Audrey Ludwig, Catherine Casserley, Stephen Robson)

271 Ministry of Justice, ‘Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: January to March 2024’ (13 June 2024): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2024/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2024#employment-tribunals> [accessed 27 September 2024]

272 [Q 56](#) (Catherine Casserley, Audrey Ludwig), written evidence from Audrey Ludwig ([YDP0069](#))

273 Written evidence from Trades Unions Congress (TUC) ([YDP0048](#))

274 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

275 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#)); [Q 56](#) (Audrey Ludwig)

the complexity of employment law and the Equality Act 2010 makes this particularly challenging for young disabled people.²⁷⁶ Employers, on the other hand, will be likely to have legal representation.²⁷⁷

149. Compounding these issues is the fact that the limitation period in the Employment Tribunal is particularly short: a claim has to be lodged within three months less one day from the date of the conduct giving rise to the complaint. The EHRC viewed this as particularly challenging for young disabled people and others at risk of discrimination or harassment.²⁷⁸ In particular, for claims concerning access to reasonable adjustments, the lack of any deadline for responding to a request for reasonable adjustments makes it impossible to know “when the clock starts ticking for a tribunal claim.”²⁷⁹
150. These barriers to bringing a claim mean that, for many employers, the risk of being on the receiving end of an adverse judgment is remote²⁸⁰ and does not provide employers with “sufficient incentive” to put reasonable adjustments in place.²⁸¹ Conversely, we also heard that some employers have serious concerns about “doing anything that might get them in front of a tribunal ... for having done something wrong ... that is not necessarily the reality, but that is the perception.”²⁸² This fear of litigation may not, however, drive better behaviour. Mr Hale suggested that “if you make things look like they are a legal risk then you drive risk-averse behaviour ... when what you need is a bit of risk-taking at management level to see people with potential and bring them into the workplace.”²⁸³
151. In its manifesto for the 2024 General Election, the current Government committed to implementing its ‘Plan to make work pay: Delivering a New Deal for Working People’,²⁸⁴ promising to introduce legislation to that end within its first 100 days in power.²⁸⁵ Among the commitments within this plan is a promise to create a so-called Single Enforcement Body,²⁸⁶ with powers to inspect workplaces and “undertake targeted and proactive enforcement work and bring civil proceedings upholding employment rights.” The plan also promises to reform the employment tribunals to simplify, streamline, and speed up processes and double the limitation period for bringing a claim, from three months to six months.²⁸⁷
152. **Disabled people, particularly young disabled people, face significant barriers to upholding their workplace rights. The current enforcement mechanisms fail to uphold these rights in a way that supports disabled claimants to remain in work and do not incentivise employers to respect the rights of their disabled employees. We therefore welcome the Government’s commitment to introducing a Single Enforcement**

276 Q 56 (Catherine Casserley); written evidence from Audrey Ludwig (YDP0069)

277 Q 56 (Catherine Casserley)

278 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (YDP0054)

279 Q 33 (Deirdre Costigan); see also Q 56 (Catherine Casserley).

280 Q 33 (Jane Lancaster)

281 Q 56 (Audrey Ludwig)

282 Q 168 (Heather Hall)

283 Q 179 (David Hale)

284 Labour Party, *Labour’s plan to make work pay - delivering a new deal for working people* (June 2024): <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MakeWorkPay.pdf> [accessed 16 July 2024]

285 Labour, *Change: Labour Party manifesto 2024* (June 2024) p 45: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf> [accessed 16 July 2024]

286 Labour Party, *Labour’s plan to make work pay - delivering a new deal for working people* (June 2024), p 16: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MakeWorkPay.pdf> [accessed 16 July 2024]

287 *Ibid.*, p 17

Body and to reforming the Employment Tribunal to simplify the claims process, extend deadlines, and reduce delays.

153. *The Government must keep its promise to start the process of implementing its ‘Plan to make work pay’.*
154. *In establishing the Single Enforcement Body, the Government must ensure that the Body’s remit includes the enforcement of disability-related workplace rights and that these are prioritised. The Government must also ensure that the Body has the powers necessary to support proactively those disabled people who are more vulnerable to having their rights breached or who are less able to engage effectively with other enforcement mechanisms.*
155. *Alongside the introduction of a Single Enforcement Body, an Employment Tribunal which employees can bring their cases to must remain in place. We urge the Government to complete its reforms of the Employment Tribunal System as a matter of urgency and ask the Government to provide the Committee with an update on progress with this and with reducing the claims backlog by September 2025.*

Awareness of rights

156. There is also the problem of low awareness of their rights among young disabled people. Bethany Bale, Policy and Campaigns Officer, Disability Rights UK, explained that young disabled people often “do not know that their rights not being delivered is unlawful and that they can challenge that.”²⁸⁸ This view was echoed by the young disabled people that the Committee spoke to. In one of our engagement events, a young disabled woman stated that, in her PHSE education, other protected characteristic groups were discussed but disability was not mentioned.²⁸⁹
157. EHRC stated that it “works to ensure that schools support a rights-respecting society, with all pupils learning about rights and the importance of respecting difference, to promote understanding between different groups.”²⁹⁰ However, its own evidence also noted that young disabled people are “unlikely to be aware of their rights”²⁹¹ and, as Catherine Casserley, a barrister specialising in disability discrimination cases, told us, there is no “obligation on anyone to advise young people of what their rights are.”²⁹²
158. We note that, in its ‘Plan to Make Work Pay’,²⁹³ the Government commits to introducing a “duty on employers to inform all new employees of their right to join a union, and to inform all staff of this on a regular basis”.²⁹⁴
159. **We consider that, in addition to the introduction of a duty to inform all employees of their right to join a union, there is a compelling case for introducing a wider duty on employers to inform employees**

288 [Q 42](#) (Bethany Bale)

289 See Public Services Committee, ‘Summary notes of engagement events for the transition from education to employment for young disabled people inquiry’ (March 2024): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45330/documents/224463/default/>

290 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

291 *Ibid.*

292 [Q 54](#) (Catherine Casserley)

293 See para 140 above.

294 Labour Party, *Labour’s plan to make work pay - delivering a new deal for working people* (June 2024), p 13: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MakeWorkPay.pdf> [accessed 16 July 2024]

about the most important and consequential workplace rights more generally. In particular, we believe that both employers and the Government should be responsible for ensuring that all employees are informed about workplace rights relating to disability and reasonable adjustments.

160. *We ask the Government, whether in conjunction with the proposed duty to inform workers of their right to join union or in separate legislation, to introduce a duty for employers to inform their employees of their workplace rights and, in particular those rights relating to disability and reasonable adjustments.*
161. *When developing an information hub setting out support for young disabled people during the transition from education to work the Government should ensure that workplace rights are prominently highlighted.*

Earlier resolution

162. Legal experts and a trade union representative argued that workplace rights matters were better resolved before they reached the tribunal, for example through early conciliation processes.²⁹⁵ Stephen Robson, Senior Solicitor on Employment and Discrimination for the Disability Law Service, believed that this would allow employees and employers to “resolve issues before they become too deep” and enable the disabled person to return to work quickly with appropriate support.²⁹⁶ However, Audrey Ludwig, Director of the Suffolk Law Centre, argued that “it is rare for employers to engage at early conciliation stage”.²⁹⁷
163. The Government provides assistance through the Equality Advisory and Support Service, which supports people to resolve issues before taking court action. Marcus Bell, the Director of the Equality Hub at the Cabinet Office, told us that this “is not a very well-known service, but it gets pretty good feedback”.²⁹⁸ EHRC suggested that the service should receive more funding “to help them achieve their aim of providing advice for disabled people with discrimination cases”.²⁹⁹
164. *The Government should take steps to improve awareness of the Equality Advisory and Support Service.*
165. *The Government should explore ways of incentivising employers to engage with early conciliation mechanisms, such as the Equality Advisory and Support Service and Acas.*

Mandatory reporting

166. Several contributors supported the introduction of mandatory reporting of disability employment information by large employers, in line with the

295 [Q 37](#) (Deirdre Costigan); [Q 56](#) (Audrey Ludwig, Stephen Robson)

296 [Q 56](#) (Stephen Robson)

297 Written evidence from Audrey Ludwig ([YDP0069](#))

298 [Q 16](#) (Marcus Bell)

299 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

Disability Employment Charter (the Charter).³⁰⁰ The Charter calls for a set of government interventions relating to disability and employment, which organisations can indicate their support for by signing the charter. One intervention the Charter calls for is the introduction of mandatory reporting for large employers of “the number of disabled people they employ as a proportion of their workforce, their disability pay gap, and the percentage of disabled employees within each pay quartile.”³⁰¹ Disability@Work, a team of academics focused on disability employment and a founding signatory of the Charter, noted that “several employers already report disability employment metrics”, showing that it is possible to do so. Examples include EY, Capita, and Clifford Chance.³⁰²

167. The previous Government acknowledged the benefits of disability employment reporting in its framework for voluntary reporting on disability, mental health and wellbeing. This stated that “transparency and reporting are effective levers in driving the culture change required to build a more inclusive society.”³⁰³ The framework also noted the benefits that voluntary reporting has for employers.
168. **In our view, all of the benefits of the voluntary reporting of employers’ disability data would apply equally to mandatory reporting.**
169. Witnesses were critical of the voluntary nature of current reporting mechanisms. The EHRC stated that “there has been no assessment of either take up by employers or the effectiveness of the current framework on improving outcomes for disabled workers.”³⁰⁴ Deirdre Costigan highlighted the impact of making reporting mandatory: “we have seen with the gender pay gap that change does not happen unless this is mandatory. There was a voluntary system, but nobody did it.”³⁰⁵ Bethany Bale argued that making reporting mandatory would ensure public accountability and transparency. She also thought it would provide a strong incentive for employers: “Reputational risk can mean that employers are more likely to engage.”³⁰⁶
170. We did hear some concerns about introducing mandatory reporting. For example, employees may choose not to disclose that they have a disability due to concerns about discrimination³⁰⁷ possibly for cultural reasons³⁰⁸ or

300 Written evidence from Hft ([YDP0013](#)); Shaw Trust ([YDP0027](#)); DFN Project SEARCH ([YDP0043](#)); Trades Union Congress (TUC) ([YDP0048](#)); Youth Employment Group ([YDP0050](#)); Disability@Work ([YDP0056](#)); British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) ([YDP0063](#)); Disability Rights UK ([YDP0065](#)); Unison ([YDP0068](#)), and ThinkForward ([YDP0076](#)). Other signatories of the Charter who gave evidence include Leonard Cheshire, the Activity Alliance, Down’s Syndrome Association, the Employment Related Services Association, and the National Autistic Society.

301 The Disability Employment Charter (DEC) ‘The Charter’: <https://www.disabilityemploymentcharter.org/blank> [accessed 27 September 2024]

302 Written evidence from Disability@Work ([YDP0056](#))

303 Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health and Social Care, ‘Voluntary reporting on disability, mental health and wellbeing: A framework to support employers to voluntarily report on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace’ (22 November 2018): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voluntary-reporting-on-disability-mental-health-and-wellbeing/voluntary-reporting-on-disability-mental-health-and-wellbeing-a-framework-to-support-employers-to-voluntarily-report-on-disability-mental-health-an> [accessed 23 September 2024]

304 Written evidence from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#))

305 [Q 40](#) (Deirdre Costigan). This point was also made by [Q 47](#) (Bethany Bale), [Q 113](#) (Laura Davis), in written evidence from Unison ([YDP0068](#)), the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) ([YDP0054](#)) and Disability@Work ([YDP0056](#)).

306 [Q 40](#) (Bethany Bale)

307 [Q 175](#) (Hector Minto)

308 [Q 175](#) (Angela Matthews)

because they do not identify as disabled, thereby skewing the data. This could be mitigated by the use of anonymous employee surveys, but this would limit employers' ability to report pay gap information. Alternatively, employers could offer assurances that this information would be treated anonymously.³⁰⁹ Organisations could also take steps to improve their culture so that employees were willing to disclose that they have a disability or health condition.³¹⁰

171. Pay gap reporting might also adversely affect those employers that employ more disabled people, because disabled people are frequently hired at lower grades, thereby creating larger pay gaps.³¹¹ Disability@Work argued that this “highlights the importance of employers providing a narrative to help explain and provide context to their pay gap figures.”³¹²
172. Nonetheless, in its manifesto for the 2024 General Election, the current Government indicated that it intended to introduce disability pay gap reporting for large employers, “building on gender pay gap reporting.”³¹³
173. **We welcome the Government’s commitment to the principle that disabled people should be paid equally and to the introduction of disability pay gap reporting.**
174. *We urge the Government to ensure that disability pay gap reporting is mandatory for employers with more than 250 employees and for all Disability Confident Leaders.*
175. *We also ask the Government to support companies with fewer than 250 employees to report voluntarily, drawing on best practice from large employers who already report this information in a meaningful way.*

309 Written evidence from Disability@Work ([YDP0056](#))

310 [Q 175](#) (Hector Minto)

311 Work and Pensions Committee, *Disability employment gap* (Second Report, Session 2021–22, HC189)

312 Written evidence from Disability@Work ([YDP0056](#))

313 Labour Party, *Change Labour Party Manifesto 2024* (June 2024), p 89: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf> [accessed 27 September 2024]

CHAPTER 7: SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS: CREATING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

176. In the preceding chapter, we discussed the challenges that young disabled people face in enforcing their workplace rights and the legal framework underpinning this. This chapter focuses on the other side of that coin: how employers can be encouraged and supported to employ young disabled people. While there are numerous support schemes³¹⁴ and organisations working with employers,³¹⁵ and there is guidance on supporting disabled people in the workforce,³¹⁶ these do not appear to be cutting through to employers, with many of our contributors reporting low awareness of the rights of disabled people³¹⁷ and of schemes such as Access to Work.³¹⁸

Disability Confident

177. In terms of the Government support available to employers, the Disability Confident scheme is viewed as the flagship programme for encouraging employers to employ disabled people. As of May 2024, the published data suggest that 19,637 employers have signed up to the scheme. There are three levels of accreditation under the scheme. The lowest is ‘Disability Confident Committed’, which requires an employer to “agree to the Disability Confident commitments and identify at least one action that [they]’ll carry out to make a difference for disabled people.”³¹⁹ Next, ‘Disability Confident Employer’ accreditation is obtained through self-assessment, against two themes: “getting the right people for your business” and “keeping and developing your people”,³²⁰ following which the employer will be registered for 3 years. It is only Disability Confident Leaders, the highest level of accreditation, who are subject to any external scrutiny. They are required to have their self-assessment validated by someone outside of their business³²¹ and confirm that they “are employing disabled people”³²².

178. The Committee heard a range of views about the scheme. On the positive side, the most prominent was Hector Minto, Director of Accessibility Evangelism for Microsoft. Microsoft is a certified Disability Confident Leader and Mr Minto described the scheme as “an incredible starting point”³²³ when viewed in a global context. He outlined how Microsoft was “trying to recruit more of our partner network into Disability Confident and make sure they have the learning.”³²⁴ Another relatively positive view was expressed by the Youth Employment Group Disability Subgroup, which said that “there is some evidence ... that the Disability Confident scheme has improved attitudes towards employing disabled people for employers who sign up.”³²⁵

314 See Chapter 5

315 See for example [Q 176](#) (Hector Minto); written evidence from Leonard Cheshire ([YDP0033](#)), and ThinkForward ([YDP0076](#))

316 For example from ACAS, the Health and Safety Executive.

317 See Chapter 6.

318 See Chapter 4.

319 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), ‘How to sign up to the Disability Confident employer scheme’ (14 July 2016, updated 25 November 2019): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme> [accessed 24 September 2024]

320 *Ibid.*

321 [Q 177](#) (Angela Matthews)

322 [Q 49](#) (Lynne Turnbull)

323 [Q 177](#) (Hector Minto)

324 *Ibid.*

325 Written evidence from the Youth Employment Group ([YDP0050](#))

179. However, these positive perspectives were the exception. A common complaint was that the scheme does not require employers to change their behaviour and that Disability Confident Committed and Disability Confident Employer status “can be reached without an organisation having to employ a single disabled person.”³²⁶ Professor Kim Hoque, Cofounder of Disability@Work, has published research indicating that the “percentage of the workforce that is disabled is no higher, and disabled employees’ experiences of work are no better, in organisations in the Disability Confident Business Leaders’ Group³²⁷ than in non-Disability Confident organisations.”³²⁸
180. We heard reports of disabled people having poor experiences with Disability Confident employers. Disability Rights UK’s Apprentice Network reported that they had looked for Disability Confident employers “because they thought they would be more inclusive, but their experience was not that at all.”³²⁹ Sense³³⁰ and RNIB³³¹ reported that the disabled people that they work with faced workplace discrimination from Disability Confident employers. Laura Davis explained that part of the problem is that employers lack an understanding of what they actually need to do to be ‘disability confident’: “employers [who] have signed up to Disability Confident ... understand ... why it is important, but they do not know the how: ‘How do I make sure that my recruitment process is accessible? What do I do to offer alternative pathways?’”³³²
181. This gives rise to another concern, in that the scheme in its current form may actually lead disabled people towards unsuitable employers. In the words of David Hale, “if a jobcentre has a disabled jobseeker, they are more likely to go to a Disability Confident employer ... [but they] would probably be better off trying to place that person with a small business that is looking to employ someone and give them a chance.”³³³
182. We heard of a considerable lack of trust in the scheme among disabled people. The Trades Union Congress suggested that people “have little faith that the scheme leads to employers becoming more inclusive places to work for disabled people.”³³⁴ Disability Positive said that the people they support “feel that the scheme at Committed³³⁵ and Employer³³⁶ status is a tick box exercise and not a meaningful route to improved employment opportunities.”³³⁷

Disability Confident Leaders

183. The Disability Confident Scheme promotes such behaviour as part of Level 3 of the scheme, Disability Confident Leader, which introduces an

326 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire ([YDP0033](#))

327 Level 3 – the highest level.

328 Disability@Work, ‘Does the government’s disability confident scheme improve disability employment outcomes’ (December 2023): <https://www.disabilityatwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Disability@Work-Disability-Confident-research-brief-December-2023.pdf> [accessed 23 September 2023]

329 [Q 49](#) (Bethany Bale)

330 Written evidence from Sense ([YDP0037](#)); see also written evidence from Disability Rights UK ([YDP0065](#)).

331 Written evidence from RNIB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People ([YDP0028](#))

332 [Q 111](#) (Laura Davis)

333 [Q 177](#) (David Hale)

334 Written evidence from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) ([YDP0048](#))

335 Level 1

336 Level 2

337 Written evidence from the Youth Futures Foundation ([YDP0044](#))

expectation that they “encourage other employers to become Disability Confident”.³³⁸ There are examples of large employers providing support to others. For example, we heard that Microsoft,³³⁹ Coca-Cola, and Amazon³⁴⁰ were providing support to organisations to employ more disabled people, including those within their supply chains, as were smaller organisations such as The Usual Place.³⁴¹ However, Hector Minto suggested that “not every company” that is a Disability Confident Leader is working to promote disability inclusion,³⁴² and Leonard Cheshire reported that less than 1 per cent of Disability Confident Employers are Disability Confident Leaders.³⁴³

Reform of the Disability Confident scheme

184. Given the range of concerns about Disability Confident, it is unsurprising that we heard numerous calls for reform. The EHRC called for a “full evaluation”, including how effectively the scheme had improved “the proportion of disabled people in work, and on the pay, progression and retention of disabled workers”.³⁴⁴ Several witnesses called for more rigorous assessment criteria and reporting requirements, and for there to be real consequences for those that do not maintain the standards required. Sense recommended independent auditing for all levels of the scheme, taking into account the experience of disabled employees, rather than companies assessing themselves.³⁴⁵
185. Disability@Work argued for amending the certification criteria to “focus on ... minimum thresholds regarding the number of disabled people the organisation employs as a percentage of their workforce”.³⁴⁶ They also argued that there should be a mechanism for employers who “slip below” these thresholds to be moved down to lower levels of the scheme.”³⁴⁷
186. In its written evidence, DWP told us that it was continuing to develop and grow the scheme and expected to “publish refreshed guidance, tools, and products which will provide employers with a better understanding of what being a disability confident employer means.”³⁴⁸ In subsequent oral evidence, the then Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work told us that these improvements were “a work in progress” but that the new guidance had now been published and her department was “continuing to engage with disabled people to hear their voices and what they need in it.”³⁴⁹

338 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), ‘Level 3: Disability Confident Leader’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-guidance-for-levels-1-2-and-3/level-3-disability-confident-leader> [accessed 27 September 2024]

339 Q 172, Q 177 (Hector Minto) ; see also written evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (YDP0075).

340 Q 113 (Laura Davis)

341 Q 161 (Heather Hall)

342 Q 177 (Hector Minto)

343 Written evidence from Leonard Cheshire (YDP0033), see also Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), ‘Employers that have signed up to the Disability Confident scheme’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up> [accessed 27 September 2024]

344 Written evidence from Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (YDP0054)

345 Written evidence from Sense (YDP0037)

346 Written evidence from Disability@Work (YDP0056)

347 Written evidence from Disability@Work (YDP0056); see also written evidence from Leonard Cheshire (YDP0033); Disability Rights UK (DR UK) (YDP0065); Trades Unions Congress (TUC) (YDP0048), and DFN Project SEARCH (YDP0043)

348 Written evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (YDP0055)

349 Q 184 (Mims Davies MP)

187. *Achieving Disability Confident status at any level should be made conditional upon the employer demonstrating that it has reached clearly defined thresholds for the percentage of its workforce that is disabled. This reporting should be subject to external audit, with an employer's status being lost or downgraded after a year where these thresholds are not reached.*
188. *The Disability Confident scheme itself should be reformed to focus on outcomes rather than the employer's internal processes and procedures, and to ensure that those accredited at the higher levels are subject to commensurately more stringent requirements.*

Support with Employee Health and Disability service

189. DWP told us that it was “developing a digital service for employers called Support with Employee Health and Disability, offering tailored guidance on health and disability.”³⁵⁰ This service has been developed with small and medium-sized enterprises and will reportedly enable businesses to ‘self serve’ support to disabled employees and signpost employees to other relevant support, such as the Access to Work scheme. The website is currently in live testing. Scope said that the service “contains some useful information” but noted “gaps in support”, including support for managers to have discussions with the disabled people they manage, tackling negative attitudes in the workplace, and making disabled people comfortable with being open about their disability at work.³⁵¹
190. **We welcome the introduction of the Government's Support with Employee Health and Disability service, which may provide valuable support for employers with disabled employees.**
191. *The content of the Support with Employee Health and Disability website should reflect the barriers and challenges faced by both employers and disabled people and should be developed in partnership with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and employers. The site should act as a single, centralised hub for employers, with signposting to relevant support—regardless of whether that support is delivered by local or central government, or by external organisations. It should also be linked to the single information hub for young disabled people so that both employers and young disabled people can easily access the information they need.*

Support from employer organisations

192. Multiple witnesses told us that there was a role for employers and employer networks to promote good practice and awareness relating to disability and employment.³⁵² We also heard that some local bodies, such as Chambers of Commerce³⁵³ and the Humber Learning Consortium³⁵⁴ were providing

350 Written evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ([YDP0055](#))

351 Written evidence from Scope ([YDP0061](#))

352 Written evidence from Adrian Ashton, ([YDP0006](#)); Careers Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#)), and Careers England, ([YDP0024](#))

353 [Q 113](#) (Laura Davis)

354 Written evidence from the Humber Learning Consortium ([YDP0025](#))

support to employers to introduce inclusive employment practices, as were the Federation of Small Businesses³⁵⁵ and the Business Disability Forum.³⁵⁶

193. However, we heard that more could be done. CDI suggested that “employment bodies such as Chambers of Commerce could disseminate case-studies of employed young people with a disability” and the positive impact of government schemes such as Access to Work.³⁵⁷ Careers England argued for awareness raising campaigns driven by local Chambers of Commerce and FSB, focused on engaging employers to encourage them to employ disabled people.³⁵⁸
194. **Employers and employer organisations have a key role to play in supporting employers of all sizes to develop inclusive employment practices and support young disabled people in the workplace.**
195. *Alongside work to support and incentivise employer bodies to improve access to work experience, the Government should work with representative bodies and membership organisations, including Chambers of Commerce to improve awareness and support businesses to recruit and retain young disabled people.*

355 [Q 172](#) (David Hale)

356 [Q 172](#) (Angela Matthews)

357 Written evidence from the Careers Development Institute (CDI) ([YDP0021](#))

358 Written evidence from Careers England ([YDP0024](#))

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What works: a blueprint for a strategy for young disabled people

1. It is vital that services supporting young disabled people are co-produced with those young people, and with disabled people who have already experienced the transition out of education—regardless of whether they have been able to move into work. (Paragraph 16)
2. Vocational profiling provides an effective way to identify the aspirations and development needs of young disabled people at an early stage and may enable schools and colleges to put the right careers support in place. (Paragraph 22)
3. *The Government should make vocational profiling a standard part of careers information, advice and guidance for young disabled people in schools. The Government should have developed a clear plan, with a full timeline for implementing this, by September 2025, taking into account the training that careers advisers and leaders will need.* (Paragraph 23)
4. Continuous, joined up support for young disabled people, starting in school and continuing until they have secured secure employment, bridges the gap between education and work. It empowers young disabled people both to enter the workplace and to thrive once in employment and, through this, provides concrete value for money. (Paragraph 27)
5. *The Government should work with local authorities to improve the availability of ‘ready to work’ programmes such as that provided by ThinkForward, to support young people from school until they are settled in work. A plan and timeline for the rollout of such programmes nationally should be developed once the plan for embedding vocational profiling in the school careers advice system has been completed, and should be published no later than the end of the first quarter of 2026.* (Paragraph 28)
6. Supported internships are an effective way to support people furthest from the job market to gain experience of the workplace and enter the workforce. They also provide effective support for employers to address cultural and practical barriers to employing disabled people. (Paragraph 33)
7. *The Government should honour the commitment of the previous Government to double the number of supported internships and should take steps to ensure that as many young disabled people as possible are eligible for them.* (Paragraph 34)
8. *The Government should take steps to increase the number of supported internships, and should introduce ambitious, time-bound rolling targets for this. Building on the success of supported internships in NHS Trusts, the campaign should include targeted work to increase public sector uptake of supported internships.* (Paragraph 35)
9. A single information hub that delivers tailored information to young disabled people and their parents or carers would help them navigate the transition from education to work, identify appropriate support, and understand their specific rights and entitlements. (Paragraph 40)
10. *Drawing on the experience of Scotland, the Government should develop an information hub modelled on ARC Scotland’s COMPASS tool for people in England. This should be developed through consultation and in partnership with disabled people and launched within 12 months of the date of this report.* (Paragraph 41)

11. The Individualised Placement and Support model is a proven, effective way to support disabled people to access and remain in work. It is vital that momentum on rolling out IPS is maintained. (Paragraph 45)
12. *The Government should continue the rollout of IPS in Primary Care, setting ambitious targets both for nationwide availability of the scheme and for the number of people the scheme will support every year. The Government should publish detailed statistics on the progress of the scheme at least annually. We ask the Government to set out their policy in this area at the earliest possible opportunity.* (Paragraph 46)

Preparing for work: how effective is the education system?

13. *There is an overarching concern that the education system is not delivering for young people with special educational needs. As a matter of urgency, the Government should review and improve the support young disabled people receive in the education system.* (Paragraph 50)
14. Education, Health and Care Plans help young disabled people receive essential educational support and are fundamental to enabling many young disabled people to access employment programmes such as supported internships or more accessible apprenticeships. However, the current system does not deliver the vital support that many young disabled people need, nor does it adequately support the councils and schools expected to deliver it. The current lack of funding and delays in the application process mean that young disabled people are left without vital support, while local authorities waste public money fighting losing battles at tribunal. Alongside this, local authorities and education providers do not have the resources they need to fulfil the requirements set out in existing EHCPs. (Paragraph 55)
15. *The Government should increase its support for local authorities to deliver EHCPs and closely monitor both the timeliness and robustness of their decision-making with reference to the 20-week timeline for producing a draft EHCP, as well as the proportion of decisions overturned on appeal. We ask the Government to update the Committee by June 2025 on its progress in improving processes, reducing delays, and minimising SEND Tribunal costs and appeals with regard to EHCPs.* (Paragraph 56)
16. *Before June 2025, DfE should collect and publish data on the number of full-time equivalent careers advisers practicing in England and the number of advisers who have received specialist training relating to pupils with SEN.* (Paragraph 63)
17. *The Government should review training for careers advisers and leaders. This review should consider a) making in-depth SEN training a mandatory aspect of careers adviser qualifications, b) introducing a National Professional Qualification on careers education, information advice and guidance for careers leaders which includes required training on SEN and careers. We ask the Government to provide an update on this by March 2025.* (Paragraph 64)
18. Because of the greater barriers they face to accessing employment, and their need for a deeper understanding of the kinds of support employees can access, young disabled people are particularly likely to benefit from targeted, specialist careers advice. It is deeply concerning that this specialist advice is not available to all. (Paragraph 68)
19. *The Government's review of post-16 qualifications reform must take into account the employment outcomes, qualifications and assessments open to young disabled people.* (Paragraph 74)

20. The introduction of T Levels offers opportunities for young disabled people to gain valuable workplace experience and skills. There is a risk, however, that it will prevent some from progressing in further education through other routes. For those unable to access T Levels, BTECs are the ideal alternative, and it is concerning that these are being discontinued even though the impact on young disabled people is acknowledged and recognised. We welcome the Government's decision to pause the defunding of qualifications in August 2024 and to conduct a rapid review of post-16 qualifications reform. (Paragraph 79)
21. *The Government's review of post-16 qualifications reform must consider and prioritise the impact that reforms will have on young disabled people. The Government must commit to retaining all extant BTEC courses at least until there has been a full evaluation of the impact of the introduction of T Levels both generally and specifically on young disabled people. Even if the ultimate decision is to discontinue support for BTECs, this support must continue until alternative level 2 and level 3 qualifications suitable for young disabled people have been fully developed.* (Paragraph 80)
22. We welcome the Government's commitment to providing every young person with two weeks' work experience. (Paragraph 87)
23. *The Government must ensure that young disabled people are given equal access to work experience and must work with DWP, schools, and local government bodies to address the barriers to access to work experience for young disabled people identified in this chapter. This should include introducing further incentives for schools and colleges to develop work experience opportunities, taking steps to improve support for employers offering work experience, and supporting and incentivising local bodies such as Chambers of Commerce to encourage businesses to offer work experience opportunities. We ask the Government to provide an update to us on progress in this area by March 2025.* (Paragraph 88)
24. We welcome the roll-out of supported internships and the Government's efforts to widen eligibility for them. (Paragraph 91)
25. *The Government should continue to take steps to widen eligibility for supported internships beyond those with Education, Health and Care Plans while ensuring that supported internships are targeted at those who need a high level of support.* (Paragraph 92)
26. We welcome the steps taken to make apprenticeships more accessible to young disabled people, including those without an EHCP, and the commitment to nurturing peer support and learning through the Disabled Apprentice Network. (Paragraph 97)
27. *We welcome the Government's steps to make flexibilities around maths and English requirements accessible to people without an Education, Health and Care Plan. The Government should launch a campaign to clearly communicate the new criteria, promote apprenticeships to employers and training providers and incentivise employers to take on disabled apprentices, and should monitor the number of young disabled people starting apprenticeships due to these changes in eligibility criteria.* (Paragraph 98)
28. *Working with the Office for Students, the Government should review the provision and quality of accessibility information provided by universities to students. This should include physical accessibility of spaces, adjustments available to students*

and previous examples of how adjustments have been implemented, considering the views of disabled students and academics. This review should identify actions for the Government, the Office for Students and universities to take, and should be published before March 2026. (Paragraph 101)

Entering the workforce: the role of employment services and programmes

29. The joining together of Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service to create a national jobs and careers service presents an opportunity to ensure these services are delivering high-quality, tailored, joined-up advice for young disabled people. (Paragraph 111)
30. *In the process of establishing the proposed national jobs and careers service, the Government should introduce further training for Work Coaches and DEAs to ensure they are fully able to understand the specific barriers young disabled people face, including in the commissioning and use of assistive technologies. New training should be in place before March 2025. (Paragraph 112)*
31. *The Government should take steps to ensure that employment support services such as Jobcentre Plus and National Career Service facilities are fully accessible for disabled people, including for those who require reasonable adjustments or assistive technology to search for work. (Paragraph 113)*
32. The Access to Work programme has the potential to be transformational in supporting young disabled people to access and remain in work but its potential is not being realised. Poor awareness of the scheme, and delays in processing applications, are preventing it from supporting as many disabled people as it could. We, therefore, welcome the new Government's commitment to reducing the delays in application process. (Paragraph 120)
33. *We ask the Government to provide the Committee with regular updates on progress with reducing the Access to Work application backlog and cutting application times, starting in March 2025. (Paragraph 121)*
34. Supported employment provides an effective way to support people to access and remain in work and can deliver value for money investment. The Universal Support programme has the potential to increase availability of supported employment programmes. It is essential that the Government continues introducing and rolling out Universal Support and we hope that the Government will move quickly to allay concerns within the sector that they are not committed to the programme. (Paragraph 127)
35. *The Government should set out clear timelines and targets for improving the regional and national availability of Universal Support, as well as metrics focused on employment outcomes for the disabled people who participate in supported employment programmes. (Paragraph 128)*
36. *As part of the rollout of Universal Support, the Government should take steps to link Universal Support offers to supported internships to ensure that young disabled people with the highest needs do not drop out of work at the end of their internship. We ask the Government to update the Committee on progress of the rollout by March 2025. (Paragraph 129)*

Going to work: overcoming discrimination and securing rights

37. Despite the introduction of disability discrimination legislation over the past 30 years, disabled people still face discrimination in the workplace and significant numbers of employers hold discriminatory views. For disabled people to access, remain and thrive in work, this must end. (Paragraph 135)
38. We recognise the need for a clear timeframe for responding to a request for a reasonable adjustment. However, we consider that, taking into account the day-to-day pressures on businesses and employers, four weeks would be a more appropriate deadline than two weeks. (Paragraph 139)
39. *The Government should introduce a four-week deadline within which employers are obliged to respond to an employee's request for a reasonable adjustment. The Government should explore the means by which compliance with the deadline could be monitored and enforced, both by Government and, where appropriate, by the employee themselves.* (Paragraph 140)
40. Some employers appear to have a poor understanding of the rights of disabled people in the workplace and how to uphold them. (Paragraph 143)
41. *Within the next 12 months the Government should launch a campaign aimed at improving attitudes towards disabled people in the workplace. This should be developed in partnership with disabled people and disabled people's organisations and be targeted at employers.* (Paragraph 144)

Supporting employees: upholding workplace rights

42. Disabled people, particularly young disabled people, face significant barriers to upholding their workplace rights. The current enforcement mechanisms fail to uphold these rights in a way that supports disabled claimants to remain in work and do not incentivise employers to respect the rights of their disabled employees. We therefore welcome the Government's commitment to introducing a Single Enforcement Body and to reforming the Employment Tribunal to simplify the claims process, extend deadlines, and reduce delays. (Paragraph 152)
43. *The Government must keep its promise to start the process of implementing its 'Plan to make work pay'.* (Paragraph 153)
44. *In establishing the Single Enforcement Body, the Government must ensure that the Body's remit includes the enforcement of disability-related workplace rights and that these are prioritised. The Government must also ensure that the Body has the powers necessary to support proactively those disabled people who are more vulnerable to having their rights breached or who are less able to engage effectively with other enforcement mechanisms.* (Paragraph 154)
45. *Alongside the introduction of a Single Enforcement Body, an Employment Tribunal which employees can bring their cases to must remain in place. We urge the Government to complete its reforms of the Employment Tribunal System as a matter of urgency and ask the Government to provide the Committee with an update on progress with this and with reducing the claims backlog by September 2025.* (Paragraph 155)
46. We consider that, in addition to the introduction of a duty to inform all employees of their right to join a union, there is a compelling case for introducing a wider duty on employers to inform employees about the most important and consequential workplace rights more generally. In particular,

we believe that both employers and the Government should be responsible for ensuring that all employees are informed about workplace rights relating to disability and reasonable adjustments. (Paragraph 159)

47. *We ask the Government, whether in conjunction with the proposed duty to inform workers of their right to join union or in separate legislation, to introduce a duty for employers to inform their employees of their workplace rights and, in particular those rights relating to disability and reasonable adjustments. (Paragraph 160)*
48. *When developing an information hub setting out support for young disabled people during the transition from education to work the Government should ensure that workplace rights are prominently highlighted. (Paragraph 161)*
49. *The Government should take steps to improve awareness of the Equality Advisory and Support Service. (Paragraph 164)*
50. *The Government should explore ways of incentivising employers to engage with early conciliation mechanisms, such as the Equality Advisory and Support Service and Acas. (Paragraph 165)*
51. *In our view, all of the benefits of the voluntary reporting of employers' disability data would apply equally to mandatory reporting. (Paragraph 168)*
52. *We welcome the Government's commitment to the principle that disabled people should be paid equally and to the introduction of disability pay gap reporting. (Paragraph 173)*
53. *We urge the Government to ensure that disability pay gap reporting is mandatory for employers with more than 250 employees and for all Disability Confident Leaders. (Paragraph 174)*
54. *We also ask the Government to support companies with fewer than 250 employees to report voluntarily, drawing on best practice from large employers who already report this information in a meaningful way. (Paragraph 175)*

Supporting employers: creating inclusive workplaces

55. *Achieving Disability Confident status at any level should be made conditional upon the employer demonstrating that it has reached clearly defined thresholds for the percentage of its workforce that is disabled. This reporting should be subject to external audit, with an employer's status being lost or downgraded after a year where these thresholds are not reached. (Paragraph 187)*
56. *The Disability Confident scheme itself should be reformed to focus on outcomes rather than the employer's internal processes and procedures, and to ensure that those accredited at the higher levels are subject to commensurately more stringent requirements. (Paragraph 188)*
57. *We welcome the introduction of the Government's Support with Employee Health and Disability service, which may provide valuable support for employers with disabled employees. (Paragraph 190)*
58. *The content of the Support with Employee Health and Disability website should reflect the barriers and challenges faced by both employers and disabled people and should be developed in partnership with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and employers. The site should act as a single, centralised hub for employers, with signposting to relevant support—regardless of whether that support is delivered by local or central government, or by external organisations. It should*

also be linked to the single information hub for young disabled people so that both employers and young disabled people can easily access the information they need. (Paragraph 191)

59. Employers and employer organisations have a key role to play in supporting employers of all sizes to develop inclusive employment practices and support young disabled people in the workplace. (Paragraph 194)
60. *Alongside work to support and incentivise employer bodies to improve access to work experience, the Government should work with representative bodies and membership organisations, including Chambers of Commerce to improve awareness and support businesses to recruit and retain young disabled people. (Paragraph 195)*

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members

Baroness Morris of Yardley, (Chair)
 Lord Bach
 Baroness Bertin (to 31 January 2024)
 Lord Blencathra
 Lord Carter of Coles
 Lord Laming
 Lord Mott (from 31 January 2024)
 Lord Porter of Spalding
 Lord Prentis of Leeds
 Lord Shipley
 Baroness Stedman-Scott
 Lord Willis of Knaresborough

Declarations of interest

Baroness Morris of Yardley (Chair)
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Bach
No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Bertin
Former trustee of Kids

Lord Blencathra
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Carter of Coles
Chair and Shareholder of Glenholme Healthcare Ltd

Lord Laming
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Mott
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Porter of Spalding
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Prentis of Leeds
For over 20 years, as General Secretary of Unison, I have overseen the work of Unison's National Disabled Members' Committee and their annual conference campaigning to improve access for disabled people.

Lord Shipley
Vice President, Local Government Association

Baroness Stedman-Scott
Deputy Chair, Breakdown and Breakthrough
Last CEO of Tomorrow's People
Chair of Employment Related Services Association
Former minister at the Department for Work and Pensions

Lord Willis of Knaresborough
No relevant interests to declare

Specialist adviser

Dr Charlotte Pearson was appointed as Specialist Advisor to the inquiry in October 2023. Her declared interests are: one of the Co-Investigators and the project lead for the Glasgow team on the Economic and Social Research funded project, Exploring the inequalities and diversities in disabled young adult transitions. This project covers a number of themes which relate to the Committee's work and it runs from January 2023 until June 2025.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF WITNESSES

Evidence is published online at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/430/public-services-committee/publications/> and is available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7219 3074)

Evidence received by the Committee is listed below in chronological order of oral evidence session, and then in alphabetical order. Those witnesses marked with ** gave both oral evidence and written evidence. Those marked with * gave oral evidence and did not submit any written evidence. All other witnesses submitted written evidence only.

Oral evidence in chronological order

*	Marcus Bell, Director, Equality Hub, Cabinet Office	QQ 1–16
*	Alexandra Gowlland, Deputy Director, Disability Unit, Cabinet Office	QQ 1–16
*	Alison Ismail Director, Special Educational Needs and Disability and Alternative Provision, Department for Education	QQ 1–16
*	Dr Stephen Beyer, Senior Research Fellow, National Centre for Mental Health, University of Cardiff.	QQ 17–28
*	Dr Stella Chatzitheochari, Reader in Sociology, University of Warwick and Principal Investigator, Educational Pathways and Work Outcomes of Disabled Young People in England Research Project	QQ 17–28
*	Professor Kim Hoque, Co-founder, Disability@Work, and Vice-Dean, People and Culture, King’s Business School	QQ 17–28
*	Deirdre Costigan, National Officer, Disability Equality, UNISON	QQ 29–40
*	Jane Lancaster, Assistant Secretary, Prospect	QQ 29–40
*	Bethany Bale, Policy and Campaigns Officer, Disability Rights UK	QQ 41–51
*	Amy Little, Head of Advocacy, Leonard Cheshire	QQ 41–51
*	Lynne Turnbull, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Positive	QQ 41–51
*	Catherine Casserley, Cloisters Chambers	QQ 52–58
**	Audrey Ludwig, Director, Suffolk Law Centre	QQ 52–58
*	Stephen Robson, Senior Solicitor, Employment and Discrimination, Disability Law Service	QQ 52–58
*	Dr Nicola Crossley, SEND Representative, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)	QQ 59–68
*	Peter Monaghan, Head of SEND and High Needs Curriculum, Education Partnership North East	QQ 59–68

- Dr Anne Murdoch OBE, Senior Adviser for College Leadership, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) [QQ 59–68](#)
- * Elizabeth Franey, Deputy Director, SEND and AP System Outcomes and Experiences Division, Department for Education (DfE) [QQ 69–94](#)
- * Jennifer Heigham, Deputy Director, Strategy & Briefing, Joint DWP and DHSC Work & Health Directorate, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) [QQ 69–94](#)
- * Hannah Sheehan, Director, Skills Journey Directorate, Department for Education (DfE) [QQ 69–94](#)
- * Sam Everard, CEO and Founder at Support and Mentoring Enabling Entrepreneurship (SAMEE) [QQ 95–107](#)
- * Katharine Horler, Executive Director, Careers England [QQ 95–107](#)
- * Wayne Ingram, Deputy CEO and Co-Founder, SAMEE [QQ 95–107](#)
- * David Morgan, Chief Executive at Career Development Institute [QQ 95–107](#)
- * Laura Davis, Chief Executive at BASE and Inclusive Trading CIC [QQ 108–120](#)
- * Henry Foulkes, Policy and Public Affairs Lead at Employment Related Services Association [QQ 108–120](#)
- * Ellen Atkinson, Regional Adviser—South and South-East, National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) [QQ 121–131](#)
- * David Holloway, Senior Policy Manager, SEND, Association of Colleges [QQ 121–131](#)
- * Gary Hyndman, Principal, Sense College Loughborough, Sense Colleges [QQ 121–131](#)
- * Suzanne Davis, SEND Strategy Lead for Preparing for Adulthood, Essex County Council (LGA) [QQ 132–153](#)
- * Jane Taylor, Head of Employment, Skills and Learning, Bristol City Council [QQ 132–153](#)
- * Martin Tett, Chair, People and Places Board, Local Government Association (LGA) [QQ 132–153](#)
- * Heather Hall, Chief Executive Officer, The Usual Place [QQ 154–170](#)
- * Alex Harrison, Disability Equality Officer, Disability Wales [QQ 154–170](#)
- * Scott Richardson-Read, ARC Scotland and Scottish Transitions Forum [QQ 154–170](#)
- * David Hale, Head of Policy Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) [QQ 171–179](#)

- * Angela Matthews, Head of Policy and Research,
Business Disability Forum [QQ 171–179](#)
- * Hector Minto, Director of Accessibility Evangelism,
Microsoft [QQ 171–179](#)
- * Mims Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work),
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) [QQ 180–187](#)
- Tammy Fevrier, Deputy Director, Youth and
Skills, Department for Work and Pensions [QQ 180–187](#)
- Lorraine Jackson CBE, Director, DWP and DHSC
Joint Work and Health Directorate [QQ 180–187](#)

Alphabetical list of all witnesses

- Activity Alliance [YDP0015](#)
- Ambitious about Autism [YDP0026](#)
- ARC Scotland Scottish Transitions Forum [YDP0023](#)
- * Asda Plc [YDP0078](#)
- Adrian Ashton [YDP0066](#)
- Association of Colleges [YDP0041](#)
- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) [YDP0071](#)
[YDP0072](#)
- Ellen Atkinson, Regional Adviser—South and South-
East, National Development Team for Inclusion
(NDTI) ([QQ 121–131](#))
- Autistica [YDP0020](#)
- Professor Nick Bacon, Professor of Human Resource
Management, Bayes Business School, City University
of London [YDP0056](#)
- Amanda Bailey, Knowledge Exchange Research
Associate, Newcastle University [YDP0029](#)
- * Bethany Bale, Policy and Campaigns, Disability Rights
UK ([QQ 41–51](#))
- Ms Debra Baxter, Leader and Founder, Leader &
founder at Wigan Borough Wide, Peer Support Group
Employer [YDP0064](#)
- ** Marcus Bell, Director, Equality Hub, Cabinet Office
([QQ 1–16](#)) [YDP0001](#)
- * Dr Stephen Beyer, Senior Research Fellow, University
of Cardiff ([QQ 17–28](#))
- Gayle Brewer, Senior Lecturer, University of Liverpool [YDP0008](#)
- British Association for Supported Employment (BASE)
and Inclusive Training CIC) [YDP0063](#)

	Dr Angharad Butler-Rees, Research Fellow, University of Warwick	YDP0045
	Career Connect	YDP0034
	Career Development Institute (CDI)	YDP0021
	Careers and Employability, University of the Arts London (UAL)	YDP0017
	Careers England	YDP0024
	Dr Marie Caslin, Senior Lecturer, Liverpool Hope University	YDP0030
*	Catherine Casserley, Cloisters Chambers (QQ 52–58)	
	The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO)	YDP0040
	Dr Maria Charalampous, Lecturer, Organisational & Occupational Psychology, University of Limasso)	YDP0057
**	Dr Stella Chatzitheochari, Reader in Sociology, University of Warwick, and Principal Investigator, Educational Pathways and Work Outcomes of Disabled Young People in England (QQ 17–28)	YDP0045
	Dr Edmund Coleman-Fountain, Lecturer in Socialology, University of York	YDP0029
*	Deirdre Costigan, National Officer, Disability Equality, UNISON—the public service union (QQ 29–40)	
**	Dr Nicola Crossley, SEND Representative, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) (QQ 59–68)	YDP0071
	Dr Jane Cullingworth, Research Associate, University of Glasgow	YDP0029
	Ellie Curran, Student, Liverpool Hope University	YDP0030
*	Mims Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work) at Department for Work and Pensions (QQ 180–187)	
*	Laura Davis, Chief Executive, British Association for Specialist Employment Support (BASE) and Inclusive Trading CIC (QQ 108–120)	
	Suzanne Davis, SEND Strategy Lead for Preparing for Adulthood, Essex County Council (QQ 132–153)	
	DFN Project SEARCH	YDP0043
	Disability Positive	YDP0022
	Disability Rights UK	YDP0065
	Disabled Student Commitment Advisory Group	YDP0038
	The Downs' Syndrome Association (UK)	YDP0051
	Dynamic Training	YDP0049

Dr Martin Eden, Research Fellow, University of Manchester	<u>YDP0035</u>
Department for Education (DfE)	<u>YDP0062</u> <u>YDP0077</u> <u>YDP0080</u>
Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)	<u>YDP0054</u> <u>YDP0058</u>
Dr C. J. P. Lee, Director, Evolution Film, de Montfort University, Leicester	<u>YDP0019</u>
* Sam Everard, CEO and Founder, Support and Mentoring Enabling Entrepreneurship (SAMEE) (<u>QQ 95–107</u>)	
Dr Albert Farre, Lecturer, University of Dundee	<u>YDP0035</u>
Tammy Fevrier, Deputy Director, Youth and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions (<u>QQ 180–187</u>)	
* Henry Foulkes, Policy and Public Affairs Lead, Employment Related Services Association (<u>QQ 108–120</u>)	
* Elizabeth Franey, Deputy Director, SEND and AP System Outcomes and Experiences Division, Department for Education (<u>QQ 69–94</u>)	
C Gooding	<u>YDP0005</u>
* Alexandra Gowlland, Deputy Director, Disability Unit, Cabinet Office (<u>QQ 1–16</u>)	
Dr Christine Grant, Associate Professor, Research Centre for Healthcare & Communities, Coventry	<u>YDP0057</u>
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association	<u>YDP0053</u> <u>YDP0070</u>
* David Hale, Head of Policy Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) (<u>QQ 171–179</u>)	
* Heather Hall, Chief Executive Officer, The Usual Place (<u>QQ154–170</u>)	<u>YDP0079</u>
Dr Hamied Haroon, Research Associate, University of Manchester	<u>YDP0035</u>
* Alex Harrison, Disability Wales (<u>QQ 154–170</u>)	
* Jennifer Heigham, Deputy Director, Strategy & Briefing, Joint DWP and DHSC Work & Health Directorate, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (<u>QQ 69–94</u>)	
Hft	<u>YDP0013</u>
* David Holloway, Senior Policy Manager, SEND, Association of Colleges (<u>QQ 121–131</u>)	

- * Professor Kim Hoque, Co-founder, Disability@Work, and Vice-Dean, People and Culture, Kings Business School ([QQ 17–28](#)) [YDP0056](#)
- * Katharine Horler, Executive Director, Careers England ([QQ 95–107](#))
- Humber Learning Consortium [YDP0025](#)
- * Gary Hyndman, Principal, Sense College Loughborough, Sense Colleges ([QQ 121–131](#))
- * Wayne Ingram, Deputy CEO and Co-Founder, Support and Mentoring Enabling Entrepreneurship (SAMEE) ([QQ 95–107](#))
- Alison Ismail, Director, Special Educational Needs and Disability and Alternative Provision, Department for Education ([QQ 1–16](#)) [YDP0002](#)
- * Lorraine Jackson CBE, Director, DWP and DHSC Joint Work and Health Directorate ([QQ 178–185](#))
- * Jane Lancaster, Assistant Secretary, Prospect (trade union) ([QQ 29–40](#))
- Dr Deborah Leveroy, Head of Consultancy & Research, neurobox [YDP0057](#)
- * Amy Little, Head of Advocacy, Leonard Cheshire ([QQ 41–51](#))
- Leonard Cheshire [YDP0033](#)
- Local Government Association (LGA) [YDP0074](#)
- * Audrey Ludwig, Director at Suffolk Law Centre ([QQ 52–58](#)) [YDP0069](#)
- Dr Gemma McKenna, Assistant Professor, University of Birmingham [YDP0009](#)
- Professor Janice McLaughlin, Professor of Sociology, Newcastle University [YDP0029](#)
- Seamus Mannion, Founder, SENDCode CIC [YDP0011](#)
- * Angela Matthews, Head of Policy and Research, Business Disability Forum ([QQ 171–179](#))
- Kate Mattick, Network co-ordinator, Disabled Leaders Network [YDP0042](#)
- * Hector Minto, Director of Accessibility Evangelism, Microsoft ([QQ 171–179](#))
- * Peter Monaghan, Head of SEND and High Needs Curriculum, Education Partnership North East ([QQ 59–68](#))
- * David Morgan, Chief Executive, Career Development Institute ([QQ 95–107](#))

	Dr Rachel Moseley, Principal academic in Psychology, Bournemouth University	<u>YDP0006</u>
**	Dr Anne Murdoch OBE, Senior Advisor for College Leadership , Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) (<u>QQ 59–68</u>)	
	NAHT	<u>YDP0036</u>
	The National Autistic Society	<u>YDP0032</u>
	Newfriars College	<u>YDP0073</u>
	Dr Charlotte Pearson, Senior Lecturer in Social and Public Policy , University of Glasgow	<u>YDP0029</u>
	Mrs Jo Phillips	<u>YDP0007</u>
	Chloe Plummer	<u>YDP0016</u>
	The Salvation Army	<u>YDP0031</u>
*	Scott Richardson-Read, ARC Scotland and Scottish Transitions Forum (<u>QQ 154–170</u>)	
*	Stephen Robson, Senior Solicitor, Employment and Discrimination, Disability Law Service (<u>QQ 52–58</u>)	
	RNIB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People	<u>YDP0028</u>
	Dr Emma Russell, Reader, University of Sussex	<u>YDP0057</u>
	Dt Katie Salmon, Research Associate, Newcastle University	<u>YDP0029</u>
	Scope	<u>YDP0061</u>
	Ben Scott	<u>YDP0014</u>
	Sense	<u>YDP0037</u>
	Shaw Trust	<u>YDP0027</u>
*	Hannah Sheehan, Director, Skills Journey Directorate, Department for Education (DfE) (<u>QQ 69–94</u>)	
	Professor Tracy Shildrick, Professor of Inequalities, Newcastle University	<u>YDP0029</u>
	Snowden Trust	<u>YDP0039</u>
	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)	<u>YDP0052</u>
*	Jane Taylor, Head of Employment, Skills and Learning, Bristol City Council (<u>QQ 132–153</u>)	
*	Martin Tett, Chair, People and Places Board, Local Government Association (LGA) (<u>QQ 132–153</u>)	
	ThinkForward	<u>YDP0076</u>
	Thomas Pocklington Trust	<u>YDP0059</u>
	Trade Unions Congress (TUC)	<u>YDP0048</u>

	Dr Carlo Tramontano , Assistant Professor, GLEA at Coventry University)	<u>YDP0057</u>
*	Lynne Turnbull, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Positive, (<u>QQ 41-51</u>)	
	UCAS	<u>YDP0046</u>
	Amelia Underwood-King, Member, Disabled Leaders Network	<u>YDP0042</u>
	Unison—the Public Service Union	<u>YDP0068</u>
	United Response	<u>YDP0047</u>
	Professor Suzanne Verstappen, Professor of Epidemiology, University of Manchester	<u>YDP0035</u>
	Professor Nick Watson, Chair of Disability Studies, University of Glasgow	<u>YDP0029</u>
	Dr William Whittaker. Senior Lecturer at The University of Manchester	<u>YDP0035</u>
	Whizz Kidz	<u>YDP0018</u>
	Carlos Wong	<u>YDP0010</u> <u>YDP0012</u>
	Department for Work and Pensions	<u>YDP0055</u> <u>YDP0075</u>
	Youth Employment Group Disability Subgroup	<u>YDP0050</u>
	Youth Futures Foundation	<u>YDP0044</u>

APPENDIX 3: CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The House of Lords Public Services Committee has launched an inquiry into the transition from education to employment for young disabled people.

This is a public call for written evidence to be submitted to the House of Lords Public Services Committee. The Committee has launched an inquiry into employment and career support for young disabled people leaving education and entering the job market and workplace. The Committee invites written contributions by 21 September 2023.

Committee inquiries: background

Committees run inquiries to scrutinise government policy. To do that they take oral and written evidence on specific topics and consider it. They then publish a report with recommendations to government. The Government must respond, and there will in due course be a Parliamentary debate. The Public Services Committee is responsible for scrutinising public services, including health and education.

This inquiry: background

The Department for Work and Pension's Family Resources Survey estimates that 24% of people report that they are disabled, including 11% of children.³⁵⁹ Many disabled people face barriers to accessing work—disabled people are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive than non-disabled people.³⁶⁰

A key transition in young disabled people's lives is leaving education, and entering the workforce, possibly for the first time. This transition comes alongside a wider shift from services aimed at children and young people to services, and benefits, targeted at adults.

Disabled people are more likely to choose to work in the public sector than non-disabled people.³⁶¹ However, there have been reports of disabled people facing high levels of bullying and harassment in public service employers, including the NHS. The Committee would be interested in hearing about good and poor inclusive employment practices, and how best practice could become the norm, considering best practice within and beyond the public sector in the UK and further afield.

The Committee also want to hear about the support young disabled people receive throughout the move from education to employment, considering careers advice and guidance services in education settings, employment support programmes aimed at working age disabled people, and how interlinked these services are or could be.

The Government provide support and incentives for employers to employ disabled people, such as the Disability Confident Scheme—the Committee want to hear about how they could be improved or more widely understood. The Committee is also interested in hearing about what happens when employers do not meet their

359 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), *DWP Family Resources Survey: Financial Year 2021 to 2022*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2021-to-2022> [accessed 8 May 2023]

360 DWP, *Employment of disabled people 2022* (26 January 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2022/employment-of-disabled-people-2022> [accessed 8 May 2024]

361 *Ibid*

obligations to disabled workers—how effectively are the rights of disabled staff enforced?

The Committee will consider services and practices from across the UK.

Who do we want to hear from?

In short: anyone and everyone with an interest, experience (including lived experience), or expertise.

The Committee is particularly interested in hearing about the experiences and ideas of young disabled people who are currently going through the transition from education to employment, or those who have recent experience of this. We are seeking a wide range of views from people with different disabilities and health conditions.

We seek evidence on the following areas. It is not necessary to answer all questions.

General

1. What barriers do young disabled people face when leaving education and entering the job market and workplace? Does this differ between different conditions or disabilities, and if so, how?
 - (a) How far do barriers to young disabled people accessing other public services, such as health and care services, present a barrier to young disabled people accessing the workplace?

Scope of the inquiry

2. We have not focused this inquiry specifically on the experiences of young people with an Education, Health, and Care plan when they leave education and enter employment. What are your thoughts on this approach, and are there particular benefits or drawbacks to it? What other focused approaches could the inquiry take?

Support for young disabled people

3. How effectively do education systems provide careers advice, guidance and support which meets the needs and career aspirations of young disabled people? How could this be improved, and what examples of good practice are there in the UK and abroad?
 - (a) Do staff in schools and other education settings providing careers guidance and advice have the appropriate training and resources to support the needs and aspirations of young disabled people?
 - (b) How far do staff in education settings engage with employment support services and schemes such as Access to Work, support internships, or disability employment advisors in order to support young disabled people?
4. How far do employment support mechanisms such as Access to Work or Disability Employment Advisors meet the needs of young disabled people entering the job market for the first time? How could these services be improved?

- (a) What is the first point that a young disabled person would engage with an employment support scheme, and how are such schemes communicated to young disabled people?
5. What are young disabled people's experience of the transition from education-based support to employment-related support? Do young disabled people face barriers to accessing support during this transition? Could these services be better linked, and if so, how?

Public services as good employers

6. How accessible are careers in public services to young disabled people when they are first entering the job market? Are there public services which very effectively recruit disabled people, and services where significant improvement is needed?
- (a) What could public services employers learn from best practice elsewhere, including overseas, about recruiting and retaining young disabled people? What are the barriers to implementing such good practice?

Support for employers

7. How effective are government programmes which support or encourage employers to employ disabled people, particularly young disabled people? Does this differ by condition or disability? How could they be improved?
- (a) What steps could be taken to improve awareness and uptake of relevant government support schemes?
 - (b) What actions could employers be taking without Government support? What barriers prevent them doing so?

Enforcement of the rights of disabled people in the workplace

8. How effectively are the rights of disabled people upheld and enforced in the workplace? What barriers do young disabled people face in accessing the support (including legal support) that they need and are entitled to? How could enforcement mechanisms be improved?
- (a) Is the present legal framework sufficient, in theory and in practice, in dealing with disability discrimination faced by young disabled people transitioning from education to work?

APPENDIX 4: SUMMARY OF VISIT TO WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL, 30 JANUARY 2024

Summary of visit to Whipps Cross hospital on Tuesday 30 January 2024

Summary

On 30 January 2024, the Committee visited Whipps Cross Hospital in Leytonstone. The purpose of the visit was to see the supported internship programme in place at Whipps Cross. The supported internship programme is for young people with learning disabilities who would otherwise have difficulty securing a job.

The Members first met with programme leads, before going on a tour of the hospital, and speaking with interns on the programme. There was then a question and answer session.

The model

The supported internship programme is based on a model built by DFN Project Search, who deliver the programme in partnership with an employer, job coaches, and education providers. The DFN Project Search model is in place in 200 settings in England (including 68 hospitals). The team have asked for figures on how many young people the project supports.

Young people with learning difficulties are enrolled at an education setting. In partnership with a local employer, young people undertake two or three rotations in different roles. These placements are designed to provide new skills to enable the interns to gain meaningful employment. The college sets a programme of study and work with the young people and job coaches to identify what the young people would like to get out of the rotation. The interns are supported by a job coach and tuition from the education provider.

Interns are not paid during the programme. After the programme, they are either offered a job by the host employer, or they are supported by job coaches to seek a job elsewhere.

Attendees said that all interns were “*people who had been written off*”. The Committee heard that the model encouraged both the employer and the young people to reconsider their ideas of what young disabled people can accomplish. For example, a disabled young person had been placed in the most stressful unit in the hospital: A&E.

Funding

Each young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The college receives high needs funding for these students. The Access to Work fund enables DFN to provide job coaches, and the education provider funds the tutors who work with the young people. DFN would like to work with young people who do not have EHCPs, but access to funding is more difficult for these groups.

Benefits of the scheme

For the employer:

The programme leads told us that they had been told of a number of benefits for employers who run the supported internship programmes:

- Improved management because employers have to learn to communicate differently: “it’s not just people with learning difficulties who need good communication and adjustments: everyone needs that”.
- Increased staff retention.
- Existing employees disclosing their disabilities.
- Improved employee experiences of work.
- Increased productivity.
- A more representative workforce—particularly beneficial for public services with the staff community reflecting the community it serves.
- Disabled employees staying in jobs longer, taking fewer sick days, and being more punctual than non-disabled people.
- Employers not needing to employ temporary workers with their concomitant a higher costs.

It was stated that, in the DFN-supported internship model, there is no financial risk for the employers. No physical changes had been required to the hospital building in order to run the programme.

For local authorities and public services:

Employment is linked with better health outcomes, particularly for disabled people. Organisations argued that supporting an internship programme is cheaper over time for local authorities than not doing so, as it reduces the likelihood that people will require care. The Chief Executive Officer of DFN Project Search said she tells hospitals in particular: “*You can either partner with us and host these amazing people or they are going to become your patients*”. This programme was described by one attendee as representing a preventative service.

For the young people:

The Committee met a number of current interns. It was evident that the young people trusted their coaches and tutors, and had enjoyed the programme. One intern said that he “wants to be involved as long as I possibly can”. Several knew what they would like to do as their next placement, including one who wanted to work with special care babies. Another said that she found the programme helpful in “making new friends, learning new skills, having new experiences and working towards a job”.

Possible expansion

The CEO of DFN Project Search thought that the model could be part of national NHS infrastructure. Barts Hospital Trust had interns in most of their hospitals.

Barriers to expanding the scheme

Committee Members asked attendees whether there were barriers to expanding the scheme more widely, including potentially in all hospitals. A number of potential barriers were noted:

- Access to EHCPs (which “unlock” funding)
 - There are many students who may be able to benefit from the programme but who do not have access to EHCPs and cannot therefore benefit from the programme.

- It was noted that the majority of people with EHCPs are male: this was thought to be because females with learning disabilities present differently.
- Availability and speed of funding through Access to Work programme.
- The quality of jobcentre support was questioned, one example was raised of a job centre not understanding what a supported internship is, and thinking an individual in one was unemployed.
- Poor networks between employers, education providers, job coaches etc.
- Low aspirations, including from young people, parents, and education providers.
 - Attendees felt that discussions about careers should begin from a very young age: this would help to acclimatise young people and parents to the idea that they may get a job later on.
- Lack of data to demonstrate efficacy and securing funding (see below).

Data

Reliable success data was noted as being critical to demonstrating efficacy and securing funding for programmes like this to expand. Some success data was available from DFN:

- Approximately 4% of people with learning disabilities have jobs.
- However, 70% of Project Search interns get a job, and 60% get full-time jobs.
- These jobs are often paid well above minimum wage.

National data on the outcomes of people with learning disabilities was described as very limited. The Committee was told that General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) present a challenge in analysing individual outcomes. However, a projected simulation could contrast outcomes for populations who benefit from supported internship/employment programmes, and corresponding populations which do not. Data could also be collected from employers, for example on the retention and progression rates of people employed through the programme.

Requirements for the scheme

DFN Project Search was clear that buy-in from the top of the employing organisation/host business was essential, including to ensure that the interns were fully integrated. It also required a large employer, one with a range of possible placements. Hospitals were a good example of a 'skills lab' because there are many different types of roles for individuals to trial; hotels and potentially local authorities were noted as being good examples of possible employers.

Business to business advocacy had been helpful in the past to encourage other organisations to adopt the model: there were examples of private sector employers running the scheme.

Tour

Members visited:

- the pathology department, where they met a young man processing blood samples;

- a nursing ward where two young women were engaged in ward clerking and serving food to patients;
- the patient experience room, where interns were engaged in processing patients' feedback and comments; and
- the medical devices room, where interns were taught to keep track of devices and to repair equipment.

Possible concerns

One attendee suggested that increased digitisation could remove some admin-heavy jobs. This would potentially make it more difficult to employ people with disabilities.

The programme requires ongoing support throughout an individual's journey, even once they have secured a job. This is resource intensive.

There were concerns raised about how the quality of transition to work programmes can be ensured: attendees felt that a kitemark certification would be helpful here.

There were concerns about how many people would be able to access the schemes: all present wanted a funding formula which gave all learners with special educational needs and disabilities access to a job coach.