



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modernising Employment

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 2nd December 2024 – ENSURING FAIRNESS IN WORK FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. **Chair's welcome:** Lee Barron MP welcomed Peers and fellow MPs as all the attendees to the meeting.
2. **Present:** Lee Barron MP (Chair), Deidre Costigan MP, Damian Hinds MP
3. **Apologies:** Lord Lucas
4. **Presentations:**
 - a. Keith Rosser, Better Hiring Institute – (see slides 3 - 6) introduced the topic and the work of the APPG. Slide 4 highlights the facts and figures around disability and employment. Keith also spoke about the work of the BHI (Slides 5 / 6).
 - b. Prof Kim Hoque, King's Business School (slide 7) – spoke about the Disability Employment Charter, the government's Disability Confident scheme, and the review on the role of employers in creating and maintaining healthy and inclusive workplaces in the Get Britain Working white paper. The new government's greater focus on employers and workplace accessibility is welcome and necessary if the government is to meet its 80% employment target. It is also necessary given a lot of employers' EDI policies are currently little more than 'empty shells'.

His research on the Disability Confident scheme shows that the percentage of the workforce that is disabled is no higher in Disability Confident than non-Disability Confident organisations, and disabled people's experience of work is no better. Given this, an expansion of the scheme would not be recommended unless it is substantially revised.

A better starting point is for government to adopt the proposals in the Disability Employment Charter. This outlines policy reforms in nine areas, including mandatory reporting, supported employment, supported internships, and reform of Access to Work and Disability Confident. It has been signed by over 230 organisations including all the country's leading disability charities plus a range of corporates, disabled people's organisations, NHS trusts and local authorities. Several of its asks are included either in the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill or in the Employment Rights Bill. UNISON got several of the Charter's proposals into Labour's general election manifesto.

The draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill should include mandatory disability employment as well as pay gap reporting. The CBI, the Institute of Directors, the CIPD, the Centre for Social Justice Disability Commission all support mandatory disability employment as well as pay gap reporting.

- c. Lord Shinkwin (slide 8) - Prof Hoque has helpfully detailed some important matters. Important to address fairness in the workplace for the disabled. Urgency is the magic word which is missing from the debate as it is usually non-disabled people making the decisions. Policy is done by the non-disabled for the disabled. March



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2025 is 30 years since the Disability Act, remembers the sense of hope when it came out. Have been improvements but there is still exclusion and this is staggering.

The enduring discrimination across housing, transport, access to goods and services etc. This prompted me to co-author a discussion paper with Demos to help talented individuals reach the top (2019). Have chaired two Commissions looking at how to harness diverse talent, both recommended the introduction of pay and disabled gap reporting. Why should talented young disabled graduates have to wait any longer just because they are disabled? I would suggest that this is the pervasive assumption because that is what disabled people do, don't they? Many politicians are looking at this wrongly. On my side of the House, we often hear the cry that it is not possible to put in place adequate measures. Hard to ensure that employers are consistent because it would cost too much and would burden business.

Has anyone in Government calculated the true cost of the false economy engendered by this way of thinking? I suspect that the crisis of worklessness mentioned by Mr Rosser is a good indicator of the current situation. It threatens to render the Welfare State unsustainable. The current security situation casts its shadow over policy makers who think that they do not need to join the dots or consider matters from a disabled persons viewpoint.

Need to foster transparency and reward companies who champion fairness and equality of opportunity. It is so important to ensure that today's discussion is not a repeat of the one of 29 years ago. Do not want to have this discussion again in 30 years but in order not have this, we need to do what it says on the tin. We need to modernise employment by asking ourselves where we want to be in 5, 10 or 20 years time. That is the length of time it takes for someone with merit to get to Board level. Be ambitious, strategic and methodical in setting the goals. Transparent, consistent data management is needed from business. If we are serious about realising fairness and closing the disability employment gap we need to apply the same sound business principles.

- d. Emily Hyland, TUI (slides 9 – 12) – Conversations today are really important. Disability inclusion isn't a "nice-to-have." It's a fundamental human right. It's also an incredible opportunity—one that makes workplaces more innovative, empathetic, and resilient.

At TUI, as a travel business we know inclusion isn't just about colleagues—it extends to our customers as well. Accessibility in travel is central to what we do.

For customers, we're focused on demystifying accessibility—showing that it's not just about compliance but creating better, easier experiences for everyone. We're introducing neuroinclusive holidays, training to thousands of our customer facing colleagues, neurodiversity training.

These efforts are making TUI a catalyst for change - helping to make travel accessible to all:



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- Demystifying Accessibility: Going beyond the moral and legal argument.
- Accessible Holidays are just another holiday type. We're not specialist providers, we're mainstream catering for a growing demand for accessible holidays.
- Accessibility as a catalyst for innovation and improved customer experience.
- Raising TUI's Profile. Both internally and externally.

But for all the work we're doing for our customers, what about our colleagues?

The Challenge We Face

Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed compared to non-disabled people. And for those who are employed, barriers persist: limited career progression, inadequate accommodations and lingering stigma. Acknowledging the problem isn't enough. Change requires action. At TUI, we've committed to this change. We've set a clear roadmap to transform inclusion into something we live and breathe.

Understanding Through Data

Every journey starts with understanding. In 2025, we're launching the first phase of a global disability data collection initiative. To understand:

- the representation of disabled colleagues across our workforce and leadership.
- Understand how hiring, promotions, and exits affect our disabled colleagues

This data will act as our compass. But in order to gather that data, trust is key. How can we make colleagues feel comfortable to share and disclose that they have a disability? Globally, we can't make this mandatory. For many disabled employees, disclosing a disability can feel risky.

That's why our first priority is showing that we're listening, we care, and we're ready to act and not just act to tick a box, but to act with authenticity and with intention. Through forums, and engagement with our UK&I employee networking groups, we're capturing the lived experiences of our colleagues. These voices are critical to ensuring we don't just collect data but drive meaningful change that actively involves the people it will affect.

So how do we make inclusion happen?

With the launch of our DEI strategy in March, we focused on three pillars; people and culture, inclusive leadership and community. We are aiming to build the foundations for a culture of care, that truly listens to our people, ensuring every touchpoint in an employee's journey is inclusive.

We're embedding inclusion through initiatives like:

- Inclusive Guidelines—a blueprint for language, behaviour, and workplace actions.



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- Training: Launching Inclusive Leadership and Inclusion for All Training globally, in accessible formats, to reach all colleagues.
- Recruitment: A Hiring People with Disabilities Framework to support inclusive job adverts, accommodations, and onboarding.
- Disability Training in 2025
- Mentor Me programme with DEI included as a category
- Accessibility audits

It's about ensuring that every touchpoint in an employee's journey is inclusive, from accessible team meetings to flexible work options to accessible environments, we're developing a Hiring People with Disabilities Framework to attract, support and retain disabled talent. From inclusive job adverts with disability statements which has been launched globally to interview accommodations and onboarding support, we're rethinking every stage of the employee lifecycle.

To sustain this momentum, we're introducing Disability Training in 2025 that goes beyond awareness. Awareness alone doesn't create change. Knowledge is potential power - but only when paired with action. Our training will focus on equipping people with the tools to make a real difference.

We've also launched our Mentor Me mentorship programme with DEI now included as a category. We've partnered with Access Able, and working in partnership with our German Workers Counsel, we will be undertaking accessibility audits at our major offices globally, which includes an audit of our offices from a physical, sensory, cognitive or learning impairment perspective to provide recommendations for reasonable adjustments. They will also provide accessibility guides where colleagues, visitors, candidates can review the information to ensure the office meets their accessibility needs with images, virtual video.

We're fostering open conversations through our employee networking groups, which are about to launch at a global level for the first time at TUI. These spaces allow colleagues to share their experiences and help us understand what's working - and what isn't. We're launching a Global DEI and Wellbeing Forum available and open to all colleagues from across TUI to contribute to and learn about the work we're doing.

Our neurodiversity and disability employee networks in the UK&I are already actively contributing to our work, helping to shape the future at TUI for disabled colleagues.

Nothing Without Us

You've probably heard the phrase, "Nothing about us without us." It's a cornerstone of disability advocacy, underscoring the importance of involving disabled people in decisions that affect our lives.



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But I believe we need to extend it even further. It's not just about being included in conversations. No policy, process should be included without disabled people. Disabled needs are human needs. It should be nothing without us at all.

Disability inclusion isn't just about adding a voice to the table when decisions are already being made. Disabled people must be integrated into every facet of the workplace - not as afterthoughts but as key contributors to strategy, design, leadership and innovation.

Very often organisations take a reactive approach to disability: they address barriers only when someone speaks up. We want to shift that mindset. At TUI, we're working to design processes, tools, and workplaces that are inherently inclusive.

Employees don't just need to hear about inclusion—they need to see it, feel it, and experience it in their day-to-day work.

To truly advance disability inclusion, we must stop working in isolation. This is not just a challenge for HR teams or DEI leaders—it's a collective responsibility. When we work together as organisations, governments and advocates, we can create workplaces that are not just inclusive, but truly transformative for disabled people.

- e. Laura Davis, British Association for Supported Employment (slides 13 to 18) – employment has to be for all. The Get Britain Working White Paper is a welcome step forward.

Slide 15 shows the supported employment model which is based on 5 principles. Both the employer and the employee are equally valued. Disabled employees should not be grateful for a job. Autistic and those with learning disabilities find that they are likely to be excluded from regular employment'

Slide 16 shows a rich set of values which underpins what the Association does. Ambition and motivation need to be built in from the start.

Slide 17 – what is I get it wrong? The way we use language is crucially important. Take adjustments in the workplace, these average only £75 per employee. Many are afraid to ask though. It is partly about equity – what can one do differently to break down barriers? Take job sharing, why not work on a job description that benefits both employer and employees?

Microsoft and Amazon are working on being disability confident. The question is Are Disability Confident Leaders, both invested in the Supported Employment Model as part of their Inclusive Recruitment strategy. This needs to be inculcated into business in general. With an ageing workforce, we need to make sure that we are recruiting as widely as possible.

Slide 18 shows a quotation from an Association member.

- f. Lord Holmes of Richmond.



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The preceding presentations were very good. The Select Committees he has served on give one a flavour of his interests: Inclusion and Innovation. Inclusion for Innovation will put us in the best position to deliver opportunities for people across the piece. As Lord Shinkwin said you cannot talk about employment without talking about the experience. If the housing, route to work etc is inaccessible or just bad enough that it is exhausting, then no wonder you see the statistics which you see. Supports both Charters.

We are talking about enabling and empowering talent, how can a Government afford to waste any talent? About half of the disabled people are wasted year on year without access to work. We need the reporting to raise the level of focus. It is a team effort and we can achieve this. It is about changing the experience of one individual's experience. If we can make a change alongside another disabled people to make things better, we will then make progress. Not enough has happened in the last 29 years.

g. Charles Clement, BT Group (slides 20 – 22)

Slide 21 shows the important tool used to work our workplace adjustments. Starting at the end of 2022, BT Group sought feedback from across the business which showed that workplace adjustments were difficult to manage. The Business Disability Forum carried out a review of adjustments and made several recommendations for process improvements. A project team was set up with a clear plan and senior sponsorship. The plan included disabled colleagues. Also looked externally at what other businesses were doing such as Lloyds and Barclays.

We decided to create a central budget as we knew that occasionally managers would decline an adjustment based on cost if it was coming from local budgets. Partnered with a 3rd Party to provide specialist adjustment assessments and to implement the adjustments. With over 100k staff, started with a small, test group. BT are constantly checking on the effectiveness of the programme and it is a therefore an evolving process. Had 2000 referrals so far, and now at around 400 per calendar month.

Slide 22 shows the future. So far the focus has been on colleagues. Now broadening out to cover both customers and communities. Aiming to close the digital divide, especially for older people. Our ambition is for our products and services will have to be accessible by design.

h. Dan White, Disability Rights UK

Disability employment and livelihood is the theme of Disability Week.

Many factors contribute to the Disability Employment Act. Businesses lack confidence in hiring disabled people and struggle to work out how to look after disabled employees. As few as 13% of businesses think that they are doing enough.

Disabled people report difficulties getting a job and the hiring process can be demoralising. A third of adults are disabled in some way or another. Furthermore, the pay gap is 17.2% (Figures from TUC). Disabled people generally spend over £1000 a month on extra living expenses. Disabled children are twice as likely to leave education



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without any qualifications. This robs them of the tools that they need to enter the working world. This leads them to claim benefit and feel trapped.

There is a real sense when engaging with the DWP that one will lose benefits. No financial security net to fall back on if the wages are not enough to replace benefits. The DWP has a history of indifference and creates an atmosphere of fear for disabled people.

The White Paper speaks of what will work:

- Employment and pay gap reporting should be required by all employers over a given threshold.
- Supporting disabled people to employment through access to apprenticeships, tailored career advice etc.
- Employees should be required to be notified within 2 weeks of any adjustments requested.
- More time allowed out of employment for ill health.
- Increase sick pay to the European average.

These are some of the policies that Disability Rights UK want to see in place. Without collaboration nothing will change. Responsibility lies with education, an inadequate and cruel benefits system and the employer. Essential to have disabled people at the heart of any engagement, they know what it is all about as they have live with it every day!

Many disabled people to want to work but many cannot. Lets empower those who can!

5. Comments, questions and answers:

1) Diedre Costigan MP: Unison National Disability Officer before becoming an MP . We have seen many employers being ahead of the Government. We are now in a place with the new Government with policies coming to the table. Has had discussions with Stephen Timms, the Minister for the Disabled. Government wants to level the playing field. For SMEs, it is difficult for those who do make allowances as they are undercut by competitors who do not.

Almost all of the policies which Dan mentioned have been included in the Employment Rights Bill. Statutory sick pay has been improved and the Bill includes allowance for time off for disabled people. We are bringing forward an Equality Bill which will include pay and employment gap monitoring. Can be used to hold employers to account.

Next Steps document – shows what the Government wants to do next. Looking at how procurement can include policy targets. The Get Britain Working White Paper will cover a lot of what Laura was talking about to us. Wants to focus on reasonable adjustments. That will deliver a key aspect. By the end of the Parliament, a significant amount of the Charter's demands will be in law. So much talent out there which is unused, need to have them back into work.

2) Katy Phillips, Chronically Employed: 1300 people in our support group, each and everyone wants to work but are struggling either to find the right job or with their employer. Highlighted those who symptoms fluctuate but hard to find jobs for those people.



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3) Dr Zofia Bajorek, Institute for Employment Studies: in many organisation the responsibility falls on a line manager who is not equipped to have the discussion. Cited a report on cancer patients, 25% of HR managers did not know about the Equality Act and many managers are untrained. Need to be equipped as they are the anchors and competency needs improving.

Good work also needs to be defined.

4) Ross Taylor, Pfizer: we have an overwhelming need for degree qualified people and need a pipeline. Shifting the needle, UK is 4th in the world for entrepreneurs as seen by the prominence of SMEs. We have disability toolkits etc. but for the SME, how do they do it? Who supports them?

Lee Barron – no one should be worried about being sacked, cited people with terminal illnesses who can be sacked.

Kim Hoque – Line manager training is key as policies are often in place, yet it is up to line managers to implement it which can lead to patchy implementation. SMEs are often considered to be the problem children but the metrics often show that they are better employers of disabled people. SMEs employ more disabled people proportionally than large companies. There is as much variation between large organisations as there is with SMEs. SMEs are characterised by informal relationships and flexibility.

5) Katharine Weston, Mission Employable: access to work is a huge problem. Employers want people to start now but often hard.

6) Anita Pali, Sheridans: Immigration law is discriminatory, cited a client who wanted to return to work for a couple of days a week but was terminally ill. This meant a reduction in salary, under the rules the Home Office would not let her go back to work although the employer wanted to employ her.

7) Matthew Kay, Project Research: agree with speakers. Push towards supported apprenticeships but employers need to be more involved. At a line manager level staff see problems not solutions to hiring disabled people.

8) Katie Parlett, Kent SEND college: most of the young people claim Universal Credit. Try to embed work experience but when you apply for the UC, need to apply for a sick note to be able to do a part time job.

9) Natalie Lloyd, JGA Recruitment Group: data has been mentioned as key. No requirement for people to fill out a diversity form. 75% of applications come from women who see themselves as an underrepresented group. These are people who want to work.

10) Adam Khalifa, People Group: what is your view on internships

Emily Hyland: Supports young people trying different jobs that match their talents. Over 70% of people get a paid job at the end the supported internships. Cited her own daughter who has been on a supported internship. Productivity goes up across the whole organisation.

6. Conclusions:



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Lee Barron concluded by saying that people have mentioned charters, if we cannot celebrate the good, then we cannot get the bad onboard. It is about our values as a society. Time to deliver!



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6. Attendees

Name	Representing
Callum Laker	Active Inclusion
Richard Harris	Arqit
Howard Bailey	ARUP
Ayse Gul Ablas	Ay-Zey Consultancy LTD
Nick Bacon	Bayes Business School
George Warrington	BHI
Lili Hunneybel	BHI
Matthew Howe	BTGroup
George Walker	Careers and Enterprise Company
Tina Harrigan-James	Careers Collective Ltd
Judith Kerem	Caretrade Charitable Trust
Iryna Pyzniuk	Centre for Ageing Better
Katy Phillips	Chronically Employed
Tiffany Swift	Chronically Employed
Simon Shimmens	Citizens Advice, Merton and Lambeth
Sumarie Greyling	Day One
Harry Moore	DFN Project Search
Kealy Hastick	DFN Project Search
Matthew Kaye	DFN Project Search
Vipul Sura	DFN Project Search
Jennifer Smith	Disability Network
Bev Jacobson	Employable
Katy Shephard	Fulham FC and Fulham FC Foundation
Noushin Pasgar	Gener8te
Adam Wigley	Government People Group, UK Civil Service
Joanna Ashford	HACE
Karen ?	Heart of Kent Hospice
Karen Hughes	Impellam Group
Stephen Salmon	Impellam Group & Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative
Jonty Rooke	Ingeus
Dr Zofia Bajorek	Institute for Employment Studies
Cathal Connolly	Islington Council
Robert Stoner	Islington Council
Natalie Lloyd	JGARecruitment Group
Kye Lovelace	Kerb Group Ltd
Alexandra Sufit	Labour
Jay Hume	LBWF
Rosie Tulloch	LBWF
Lauren Sargent	Leonardo Hotels
Paula Musson	Leonardo Hotels



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Declan Gilroy	Lets Talk Disability
Emma Shepherd	Lets Talk Disability
Shan Gilroy	Lets Talk Disability
Katie Parlett	Lighthouse Futures Trust & National SEND Employment Forum
Colette Kennedy	Liverpool Region Combined Authority
John White	Liverpool Region Combined Authority
Philip Virgo	Lord Lucas' office
Athena Rees	Marsha de Cordova MP
Katharine Weston	Mission Employable
Richard Breach	Mitie
Sim Sian	Mitie
Lucy Clements	Pfizer Ltd
Ross Taylor	Pfizer Ltd
Iain Macleod	Red Talent Solutions
Sarah Welfare	Reed in Partnership
Kiran Herkanaidu	Reed Screening
Lillie Jamieson	Sent it to Alex
Anita Pali	Sheridans
Tanisha Brown	Skills Alliance
Louise Hayes	Surrey Choices
Renuka Gundala	Talent Grader
Jackie Thurtle	The Oaks Specialist College
Miranda Simms	TUI
Katie Smith	UA92
Dean Penn	UK Compliance Solutions
George Greaves	YIF
Olivia-Maria Viveros	