



HM Government

# National Disability Strategy



CP 512





# **National Disability Strategy**

Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions  
by Command of Her Majesty

July 2021



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# Contents

<b>Foreword from the Prime Minister</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Foreword from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Minister for Disabled People</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>About this strategy</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Action across the UK</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Part 1:</b>	
<b>Practical steps now to improve disabled people's everyday lives</b>	<b>42</b>
Rights and perceptions: removing barriers to participating fully in public and civic life and wider society	43
Housing: creating more accessible, adapted and safer homes	66
Transport: improving the accessibility and experience of everyday journeys	78
Jobs: making the world of work more inclusive and accessible	95

Education: ensuring children and young people fulfil their potential	131
Shopping: creating more consumer choice and convenience	148
Leisure: widening access to arts, culture, sport and the great outdoors	166
Public services: making access as smooth and easy as possible	178
<b>Part 2:</b>	
<b>Disabled people's everyday experience at the heart of government policy making and service delivery</b>	<b>196</b>
Disabled people at the heart of government policy making and service delivery	197
Tracking progress	211

**Part 3:****A cross-government effort to transform disabled people's everyday lives 214**

Cabinet Office	215
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	220
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	222
Department for Education	224
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	227
Department of Health and Social Care	229
Department for Transport	231
Department for Work and Pensions	233
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	236
Home Office	238
Ministry of Defence	240
Ministry of Justice	243

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	246
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<b>Annex A: Thank you</b>	<b>248</b>
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# Foreword from the Prime Minister

Imagine if there was a vast British city where the 14 million residents were much less likely than those elsewhere to have a job or even any qualifications at all. Where the children were twice as likely to become victims of crime, far fewer adults owned their own home, and the impact of Coronavirus had been distressingly disproportionate.

If such a place existed, policymakers and politicians would be clamouring to intervene and fix the obvious injustices that bedevilled the population. Think tanks would whirr into action, task forces would be created, no stone would be left unturned.

Yet these statistics relate to the daily reality of life of the UK's 14.1 million people living with a disability. And, even though it is more than a quarter of a century since John Major introduced the ground-breaking Disability Discrimination Act, no UK government has ever drawn up such

a comprehensive, concerted, cross-government plan to deal with such problems and make disability policy a truly ecumenical endeavour.

That is, until now.

Because if there is one thing more than any other that drives this government, it's our determination to level up the country so that whoever and wherever you are, the spark of your talent and potential can be connected with the kindling of opportunity.

Viewed through such a prism the situation facing our disabled people – 1 in 5 of the population – is not only a scandal for those involved but a waste of talent and potential that we can ill-afford. And while progress has been made in some areas, for example with more housing becoming more accessible, we can and must do better. Which is what this strategy is all about.

Formulated with the input of more than 14,000 disabled people in one of the largest-ever exercises of its kind, refined over many months, with help from policy experts, campaign groups, charities and more, it is a truly cross-cutting national strategy. It sees departments and agencies in every corner of Government setting out how they will do their bit to bring about the practical and lasting change that will make a material difference to the lives of disabled people right across our country.

Not just bridging the gaping chasm of education, skills and employment – even in 2021 a disabled person with a degree is no more likely to have a job than a non-disabled person who left school at 16 – but addressing the countless instances of unfairness that plague daily life in everything from grocery shopping to the accessibility of courtrooms.

It is the most far-reaching endeavour in this area for a generation or more, not merely a set of worthy aspirations but a concrete plan for the future. And, ultimately, its name is something of a misnomer. Because this strategy is not about disability at all, but ability.

The enormous ability of disabled people and the potential to see it realised.

And our ability to acknowledge and appreciate the contribution that disabled people make to our national life, and to listen and respond to their needs.

As we emerge from the long shadow of Coronavirus, I want to build back better and fairer, for all our disabled people – and this strategy is the down payment on making that happen.



# **Foreword from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Minister for Disabled People**



Many of us will have woken up this morning confronted with all the potential ways our day might be defined, not by our actions or aspirations, but by the barriers that stand between us and our day. This is a daily reality for many of the over 14 million disabled people in this country.

Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever your background, whether or not you have a disability – either visible or hidden – everyone should be able to participate fully, safely and free from prejudice in everyday life, enjoying all the freedoms and

opportunities that entails – as a commuter, colleague, customer, consumer, student, patient, service user, holiday-maker, theatre-goer, job applicant, employee, voter or juror.

Our 2019 manifesto committed to publishing a national disability strategy to improve the everyday lives of disabled people in areas like housing, transport, jobs and education. As we all start to enjoy the taste of freedom once again with our economy and society opening up from the pandemic, the significance of this strategy is even greater. Building back fairer means taking this opportunity to go further and faster to ensure disability is not a barrier to living full, independent lives where people can reach their full potential.

Building on the progress that has been made over the last 25 years since the Disability Discrimination Act, this strategy represents the single greatest focus and collaboration across government to develop a wide-ranging portfolio of practical actions that will help us to level up opportunity and improve the experience disabled people have going about daily life.

We have carried out the biggest listening exercise with disabled people in recent history, with

14,000 people responding to our UK Disability Survey. As a result, this strategy is far more wide-ranging than approaches of the past. Informed by what we have heard, the strategy sets out the actions that will positively impact every part of disabled people's everyday lives: accessible homes; commuting and getting out and about on public transport; using the local high street or going online; enjoying culture, the arts or the great outdoors; and exercising civic roles like jury service and voting. The strategy also sets out how we will help disabled people fulfil their potential through work, aiming to fulfil another manifesto commitment of reducing the disability employment gap.

Individually, each commitment may seem like a small step. Collectively, they represent a significant leap forward. And to deliver the truly transformational change across government and society we want to see, the strategy is a platform for our longer-term ambition to put disabled people at the heart of *how* government makes policy and delivers services. That includes transforming how we use evidence and data to better understand and highlight where the gaps are, leveraging government procurement to drive



change and developing a new world-leading Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology. Alongside the action and ambition, this strategy also serves as a single point of focus for holding to account every part of government that has a responsibility for delivering specific changes. Each department has nominated a minister responsible for driving delivery of the relevant commitments in the strategy and who will serve as a champion within their department to ensure the needs of disabled people are at the heart of policy-making. Ministerial Disability Champions are set out in Part 3. We commit to publish an annual report which will measure progress and offer the opportunity to update the strategy, turning it into a living document.

Informed by the experience of disabled people, the breadth of the strategy reflects the reality that disability affects people differently across different aspects of everyday life. Conversation by conversation, department by department, policy by policy, action by action, we are understanding and dismantling the barriers and attitudes that hold disabled people back so they can fulfil their personal potential and the promise of every day.

# About this strategy

**A huge range of organisations and individuals have shaped the development of this strategy.**

The UK Disability Survey launched in January 2021 and ran until April. Thousands of people responded to inform this strategy, including disabled people,<sup>1</sup> families and carers.

We also have worked with Policy Lab, which brings people-centred design approaches to policy-making, to build a more in depth understanding of the everyday experience of disabled people.<sup>2</sup> This work took place in 2020, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and aimed to deepen our understanding of the everyday experience of 11 disabled people.

Findings from the UK Disability Survey and our lived experience research are being published alongside this strategy. We hope these are useful additions to the qualitative and quantitative

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- 1 The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' effect on their ability to do normal day to day activities
  - 2 Policy Lab is a part of the Civil Service that helps departments to design services around people's experience, using data analytics and new digital tools.

evidence base on disability, as well as useful context for the development of this strategy.

The UK Disability Survey and lived experience research complements a wider programme of engagement which has been running since February 2020, including:

- meetings with our existing disability stakeholder forums:
  - 42 regional meetings of the nine Regional Stakeholder Networks (RSNs) involving disabled people, their organisations, parents and carers, totalling 225 members
  - 10 meetings with the Disability Charities Consortium, a group of 10 of the UK's largest disability charities
  - 4 meetings of the Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) Forum
- 11 roundtable discussions with a total of 98 disabled people about their experiences in daily life
- 6 cross-cutting thematic groups with a total of 130 attendees including disabled people and representatives from DPOs, charities, academia and think tanks

We are grateful to everyone who has taken the time to share their thoughts on what we should include in this strategy, whether through completing the UK Disability Survey, attending meetings or events, or engaging through social media and correspondence. Their expertise and insights have been integral to the development of the strategy. A list of organisations we have spoken to is attached with our thanks at Annex A.



The timeline for the development of this strategy has coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult for us to engage in person. Many disabled people have been shielding, while large scale events have been impossible. We are thankful for the flexibility everyone who has engaged with us has shown in moving our meetings and events online.

The engagement we have set out is only the beginning. We see this strategy as a dynamic plan that we will refresh annually to reflect ongoing work in response to disabled people's priorities. We welcome feedback on the areas we have prioritised and will take action now. In Part 2 we set out our ambition to step up our engagement with disabled people going forward.

# Action across the UK

**The UK, Welsh and Scottish governments, and the Northern Ireland Executive, share a strong commitment to supporting disabled people to enjoy the choice and control so vital to independent living.**

The Equality Act 2010 applies in Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland). The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 applies in Northern Ireland.

Each administration sets and pursues its ambitions, consistent with its devolution arrangements. For example, both the Welsh and Scottish governments have strategies and frameworks in place to increase equality for disabled people. The Northern Ireland Executive is in the process of developing a strategy specific to the needs of people in Northern Ireland.

Underlying the approaches of devolved administrations is the Social Model of Disability. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers

disabled people more independence, choice and control.

Many of the policy areas relevant to this strategy are devolved. Devolution recognises the value of such policies being tailored to the particular needs and wishes of the people in each part of the UK. As a result, different approaches have been taken on some issues, and that is to be expected.

But not all issues of importance to disabled people are devolved and decisions made by the UK government may affect the lives of disabled people across administrations.

This strategy reflects the experiences of disabled people across the UK. It recognises and celebrates the diversity of approaches being pursued and highlights good practice and initiatives of note in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is a huge opportunity to learn from each other. The UK government and the devolved administrations will continue to work across the UK to improve the lives of all disabled UK citizens.

Information is provided below about the key strategies in place in devolved administrations.

## **Northern Ireland Executive statement**

The Northern Ireland Executive began work on a new Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland in September 2020. The strategy is being developed through co-design with involvement from disabled people and their representative organisations at all stages of the process. It will be outcomes-focused, rights-based and aligned with international obligations including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Grounded in evidence, it will target areas of greatest need.

## **Scottish Government statement**

The Scottish Government plan, A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People, was published in 2016 as a delivery plan to 2021 for the UNCRPD. It was written with the direct involvement of disabled people and disabled people's organisations. It was built around five longer-term ambitions and a set of 93 actions. These actions were steps toward equality in order for longer strides to be made in the future, knowing it will take time and commitment from all of Scotland to bring



true equality for disabled people. We remain committed to achieving equality beyond the lifetime of this report. The final progress report was published earlier this year.

Scotland has a National Performance Framework, made up of indicators to give a measure of national wellbeing. They include a range of economic, social and environmental indicators. To monitor progress towards advancing equality for disabled people in 2019, and again in 2021, the Scottish Government published: Scotland's Wellbeing: national outcomes for disabled people, an analysis of the National Performance Framework (NPF) outcome indicators from the perspective of disability. The NPF indicators have been used to measure how disabled people's experiences of living in Scotland compares to non-disabled people's experiences. The use of established data, monitored on an ongoing basis is enabling the Scottish Government to track progress towards equality.

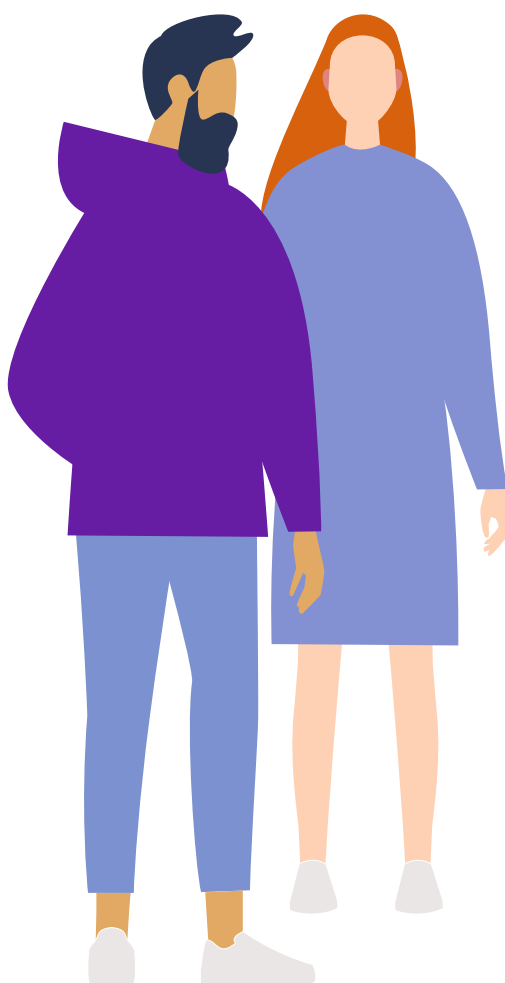
## Welsh Government statement

The Welsh Government's Framework – Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living was launched by the former Deputy Minister and Chief Whip on 18 September 2019. Our Framework was developed with disabled people, disabled people's organisations, service providers and other stakeholders, including many Welsh Government departments. The Framework is based on equality and human rights and sets out how we are fulfilling our obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Framework also highlights the role of key legislation including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Underpinning the whole Framework is the Social Model of Disability, which was adopted in 2002. The Framework is accompanied by an action plan to tackle some of the key barriers faced by disabled people including transport, employment, housing and access to buildings and places. For example, our Disabled Champions work with employers to effectively support disabled people into work. In March 2021, the Welsh Government

commenced the Socio-economic Duty, another key lever to help achieve greater equality in Wales.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, work has been undertaken to look at necessary changes to the Action Plan. Through the Ministerial Disability Equality Forum, this culminated in a report by Professor Debbie Foster, entitled ‘Locked Out: Liberating Disabled People’s Lives and Rights in Wales Beyond COVID-19’. A taskforce will be convened to take forward actions arising from the report through consultation.



# Executive summary

## The vision: transforming disabled people's everyday lives

Over 1 in 5 people in the UK are disabled. That is over 14 million of us. It is a number that has continued to rise as people are living longer and treatments and technology in healthcare improve.<sup>3</sup> Disability matters to all of us.

This national strategy recognises and builds on the progress that has been made since the Disability Discrimination Act was introduced more than 25 years ago. There have been many improvements in services, access and opportunities for disabled people. The employment gap has narrowed. Levels of understanding and visibility have increased. And there have been profound changes in public attitudes towards disability, captured and catalysed by national moments such as the 2012 Paralympic Games.

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3 Family Resources Survey: financial year 2019 to 2020: DWP

Disabled people have told us that these positive changes in recent years, while welcome, are not enough. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy and society makes the case for concerted action all the more important. Disabled people have felt the impact more than most.<sup>4</sup>

Now is the time – as we build back fairer – to raise the level of our ambition.

Our vision is to transform the everyday lives of disabled people. This will not happen overnight. We know meaningful change to transform the physical and social environments across all sectors of society will require a sustained collaboration across government.

We want to level up opportunity at every stage of disabled people's lives, as well as in all areas of disabled people's lives. Disabled children should have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential as non-disabled children, and so should disabled young people. In this strategy, we outline targeted action to support disabled children in education, as well as broader action such as changing perceptions which will benefit disabled children as well as disabled adults.

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4 Outcomes for disabled people, UK: 2020; Updated estimates of coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by disability status, England

We want to transform the lives of all disabled people. We include disabled people with visible and invisible disabilities. We include disabled people who do not identify as disabled. We include non-disabled people who might have been disabled in the past, or become disabled in the future.

This strategy sets out immediate actions we will take on the path towards our vision to transform disabled people's everyday lives.

## **The lived experience: rooting the strategy in the everyday experience of disabled people**

**“What does disability mean to me? The usual connotations – I find it harder to do certain things that others would. I see things differently. I don’t struggle. I have just spent my life finding efficient ways of getting round the challenges I’ve had.”**

**– Beth**

Disabled people's aspirations for their lives are no different from non-disabled people's aspirations.

We all want to live fulfilling lives. We want to be safe and healthy. We want autonomy about where we live, how we live, and with whom we live. We want to go outside, meet other people, and go places. We want to easily access the support we need to live an independent life and to feel confident that we won't lose it. We want to be able to participate in society, to be valued, to go to work.

However, disabled people's everyday experience is very different from non-disabled people.

Every day, many disabled people:

- wake up in a **home** that is not adapted to their needs
- rely on an unpredictable **transport** network to get out and about
- navigate inaccessible and inflexible **work**places or **education** settings
- face limited choice and additional expense when **shopping** around for goods and services

- use unresponsive and fragmented **public services** that do not meet their needs
- feel excluded from **leisure** opportunities and socialising
- find themselves barred from exercising **rights**, such as voting and serving on a jury

The current evidence base on disability is incomplete and of variable quality,<sup>5</sup> but nonetheless underlines the scale of the challenge in tackling the enduring barriers disabled people may face throughout their day.

**While at home** – only 1 in 10 homes in England have at least one adaptation for disabled people.<sup>6</sup>

**When commuting** – just a quarter of train stations have step-free access between all platforms.<sup>7</sup>

**At work or in education** – there remains more than a 28 percentage point gap in the employment rate of working age disabled people compared with working age non-disabled people,<sup>8</sup> and while the proportion of disabled people with a

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5 ONS equalities data audit

6 English Housing Survey 2018 to 2019: Accessibility of English Homes

7 DfT estimate, based on information from Rail Delivery Group

8 Labour market status of disabled people, ONS, January to March data, published May 2021



degree has increased from 15.9% in 2013 to 2014 to 23.0% in 2019 to 2020, the gap between disabled people and non-disabled people has not narrowed.<sup>9</sup>

**When shopping or getting about** – 2 in 5 disabled people had experienced difficulties shopping around for products or services, with reported barriers including a lack of appropriate facilities (16%), difficulty using public transport (15%), and difficulty moving around premises (13%).<sup>10</sup>

**When accessing public services online** – when tested in September 2020, the websites of nine of the 10 most populated English county councils did not meet accessibility standards.<sup>11</sup>

**In feeling connected to others** – disabled people are more than three times more likely than non-disabled people to often or always feel lonely, with well-being rates for disabled people consistently lower than for non-disabled people. Disabled people more often indicated that the impact of the pandemic had affected their well-being than non-

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9 Dataset: Disability and education

10 Disabled People's Access to Goods and Services 2010 (Ipsos MORI)

11 Tests reveal biggest councils failing on legal web accessibility duty 2020 (Scope)

disabled people.<sup>12</sup> The disparity in wellbeing and loneliness between disabled and non-disabled people has not improved since 2013 to 2014.<sup>13</sup>

When it comes to basic **rights** like the right to be safe from harm, disabled people are disproportionately affected by crime.



**Disabled adults are more likely to be victims of crime (20.8%) than other adults (19.0%), and disabled children aged 10 to 15 (12.0%) are almost twice as likely to be victims of crime than other children (6.3%).<sup>14</sup>**

The **14,500 earlier respondents** to the UK Disability Survey and the participants in our lived experience research told us a similar story to these statistics. Their experiences can be found throughout this strategy.

12 ONS *Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: February 2021*

13 **Outcomes for disabled people, UK: 2020**

14 Crime in England and Wales: Annual Trend and Demographic Tables

## **The action now:** practical steps to improve disabled people's everyday lives

**Part 1 sets out immediate commitments we will make to improve every part of a disabled person's day – from the moment someone gets up to the moment they go to bed.**

These immediate steps will not, in and of themselves, lead to the transformative change we want to see in disabled people's everyday lives, so we do not stop there.

## **The longer-term ambition:** putting disabled people at the heart of the design and delivery of services

**Part 2 sets out ambitious changes to how the government works with and for disabled people into the future. We commit to putting disabled people at the heart of government policy-making and service delivery – laying the foundations for longer term, transformative change.**

We will ensure disability is well understood by UK government departments and that the needs and experiences of disabled people are central to policy making and always taken into account by frontline staff.

We will work across government departments to embed the following elements, which underpin our future approach to disability:

- 1. Ensure fairness and equality** – we will empower disabled people by promoting fairness and equality of opportunities, outcomes and experiences, including work and access to products and services.
- 2. Consider disability from the start** – we will embed inclusive and accessible approaches and services to avoid creating disabling experiences from the outset.
- 3. Support independent living** – we will actively encourage initiatives that support all disabled people to have choice and control in life.
- 4. Increase participation** – we will enable greater inclusion of a diverse disabled population in the development and delivery of services, products and policies.

**5. Deliver joined up responses** – we will work across organisational boundaries and improve data and evidence to better understand and respond to complex issues that affect disabled people.

These elements complement those of the UNCRPD.

The practical steps in Parts 1 and 2 will set us on the path towards our goal to transform disabled people's lives. We do not pretend to have addressed all the issues disabled people have raised with us, nor do we pretend that transformation of our physical and social infrastructure will happen overnight.

This is a realistic and deliverable strategy that is rooted in the everyday experience of disabled people. It will not sit on a shelf. We will publish an annual report by summer 2022, and continue to drive action in the areas requiring sustained, cross-government ambition. In 2021 to 2022 we plan to focus further action on:

- accessible products and services
- tackling crime against disabled people
- social participation

We have chosen these areas because disabled people have told us they have a major impact on their everyday lives, at every stage of life from childhood, through working age, to old age. They require concerted action from government and beyond, and longer term action is required to make a tangible difference.

## **The call to action: disability is everyone's business**

This strategy sets out how the government will play its part, but disabled people have told us that there is a need for action from wider society. Disabled people's everyday experience is shaped by a wide range of actors. Individual citizens, charities, wider public services and businesses must all play their part in driving the transformative change we want to see.

This strategy is also a call to action across society. We set out the immediate steps we will take to encourage wider society to take action – for example, awareness raising campaigns to encourage individual behaviour change. We also outline how we will work with wider society in the future to drive longer term transformative change

– for example, with business through appointing new Disability and Access Ambassadors.

We want to go beyond these initial steps. We want to work with disabled people, businesses, charities, local authorities and wider society to build a national conversation about disability and a movement for change. Disabled people will be at the centre of these efforts.

You can sign up for regular updates on the work outlined in this strategy and how you can take part through the [Disability Unit's GOV.UK page](#) or email us directly at [disabilityunit@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:disabilityunit@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).

## **The accountability: ensuring cross-departmental action**

There is clearly huge breadth to the challenges that disabled people experience every day. Responsibility for tackling these challenges spans many different government departments.

**Part 3 summarises clearly the actions each government department will take as part of this strategy to improve disabled people's everyday lives. This section makes clear which department is responsible for which commitment. Each department commits to play their part, with ministerial champions setting out how they will personally drive progress.**

We will maintain momentum and hold ourselves to account by publishing an annual report that will update on progress against objectives.

To advance the objectives of the strategy, individual departments are setting out their plans in a number of the areas that disabled people have told us are key to improving their quality of life. These include:

- the Health and Disability Green Paper **Shaping Future Support**, led by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), setting out proposals to make the disability benefits system easier to access and navigate



- the government response to the **Health is Everyone's Business** consultation (DWP and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC))
- the Department for Education's (DfE) publication of the findings of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review and DHSC's refreshed Autism Strategy

We know from the UK Disability Survey and our lived experience research that social care is a hugely important area of support to many disabled people, and we have also heard it needs reform.

This strategy does not ignore the need for social care reform, which will be led by DHSC with proposals published later this year. We present what we have heard about the importance of this support to many disabled people and point to longer-term reform efforts, led by DHSC, throughout this strategy.

# **Part 1:**

## **Practical steps now to improve disabled people's everyday lives**





## **Rights and perceptions: removing barriers to participating fully in public and civic life and wider society**

Disabled people have told us that the negative attitudes of others have a significant impact across all areas of their everyday lives.

**“Very often second class, you’re not seen as equal. And we have every right. We still only have one go at life like everyone else. And just because we can’t walk as well, see as well, hear as well, whatever, that doesn’t make us any less of a person.”**

**– Wales roundtable participant**

Just 8% of disabled people, 8% of carers, and 12% of the general public ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the views held by members of the public about disability are generally helpful for disabled people.<sup>15</sup> Awkwardness,<sup>16</sup> misguided empathy,<sup>17</sup> uncertainty about language<sup>18</sup> and prejudice are daily occurrences for many disabled people and their families and friends.

**“One of the worst things is people being patronising.”**

**– Kathryn**

The impact of negative perceptions on disabled people are wide-ranging. They include loneliness, barriers to employment, and disability hate crime. Over half (54%) of disabled people worry about being insulted or harassed in the street, and

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15 UK Disability Survey 2021

16 In 2014 67% of the British public admitted that they feel uncomfortable talking to disabled people; so-called “millennials” are twice as likely as older people to feel awkward around disabled people (Scope report, May 2014, ‘Current attitudes towards disabled people’)

17 Developing a national barometer of prejudice and discrimination in Britain, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Research report 2018: this can manifest as pity, patronisation or ‘paternalistic prejudice’ (p.45); Research report 2010: Processes of prejudice: Theory, evidence and intervention: “‘benevolent prejudice’ which is often highly patronising’ (p.29)

18 Research by the English Federation of Disability Sport demonstrates disabled people’s discomfort with words like ‘superhero’ (ComRes Media Research Report 2016)

45% worry about being physically attacked by strangers.<sup>19</sup>

Attitudes are changing but have further to go. Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey in 2017 found that 83% of respondents thought of disabled people as the same as everyone else, compared with 77% in 2005.<sup>20</sup> Societal change takes time. But there is much more that the government can and should do to change negative perceptions of disabled people and inspire wider change in society.

To help ensure disabled people can play a full role in society, we are:

- bringing forward legislation to remove historic barriers to participation in public life
- using the honours system to better recognise the exceptional contribution of disabled people to the UK
- exploring how best to support disabled candidates standing for election
- inspiring social change across the UK through new public awareness raising campaigns
- improving access to justice

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19 UK Disability Survey 2021

20 Disability Perception Gap (Scope)

- publish a new cross-government strategy to tackle the crime and disorder that undermines the quality of life for everyone, including disability hate crime

We are ambitious to do more to tackle crime against disabled people. The Disability Unit will prioritise further cross-government action in this area in 2021 to 2022.

## **Removing historic barriers to participation in public life**

We will remove these barriers and ensure disabled people can play a full role in public life.

Common Law currently prohibits anyone from being present in the jury room who is not one of the 12 members of the jury. While most disabled people can serve as jurors, deaf people who need a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter cannot.

**Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will bring forward legislation in 2021 as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, to amend Common Law so that deaf people who need a BSL interpreter can do jury service.**

We will also make it easier for disabled people to cast their vote.

Under current rules disabled people can only get help at polling stations from another eligible voter or a close family member.

To improve the voting experience for disabled people:

**The Cabinet Office has introduced the Elections Bill to require Returning Officers to consider the needs of people with a wide range of disabilities. The legislation will also enable disabled people to receive help casting their vote from any companion who is over the age of 18 in UK Parliamentary elections.**

The Cabinet Office will work with the Electoral Commission to provide guidance to help Returning Officers meet the new requirement, including on assistive technologies that can be provided in polling stations.

We will remove barriers disabled people experience in taking up leadership roles in public life. This includes magistrates, MPs, and public appointees.

**MoJ is investing £1 million by spring 2022 to recruit more disabled magistrates in England and Wales as part of a wider effort to improve diversity, alongside other under-represented groups.**

MoJ will use disabled people's feedback on the experience of applying to be a magistrate and improved recruitment data to assess whether any additional action is needed to support and encourage disabled candidates to apply successfully to the magistracy, by spring 2023.

We are also committed to seeing more disabled people becoming elected representatives.



**Building on the experience of the Access to Elected Office fund and the EnAble fund, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will support a new scheme from April 2022 to support those seeking to become candidates and – as importantly – once they have been elected to public office.**

Political parties too need to play their role in helping those with disabilities achieve and succeed in public office. We will continue to engage constructively with political parties, disability charities and electoral administrators about progress in this area.

**The Cabinet Office will consider how we can best support those standing for public office and those who hold public office.**

**“As someone who is passionate about advancing the disability agenda, sometimes you’re asked about disability and it’s like you’re expected to say you’re a super human who has raised £10 million and climbed three mountains. I’m a normal everyday person, a boring 39-year-old woman working as a Tax Director. It’s difficult for me to accept that there may be some things I can’t do. I don’t see disability defining me. But I’m probably a better person for it. I’m much more resilient. I have even more determination. I can be more flexible, compassionate towards people. I don’t want people to think they’re not good enough or can’t achieve things because they have this label.”**

**– Deborah**

We are committed to ensuring fairness and inclusivity in public appointments. Typically, these will be ministerial appointments to a public body or advisory committee.

We have made good progress in increasing the number of disabled people in public leadership roles.



**In 2019, 11% of public appointees reported that they had a disability, up from just 5% in 2018.<sup>21</sup>**

We will encourage talented disabled people to apply for public appointments and support them through the application process.

**The Cabinet Office will launch a new website and application system by March 2022 to improve how talented candidates, including disabled people, can access public appointments. This will be coupled with increased outreach, including with disability networks.**

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21 Public Appointments Data Report, 2018 to 2019 – July 2020

We will also **make changes to the honours system to better recognise the achievements of disabled people in all walks of life**. This includes:

- introducing a new EasyRead nomination form and leaflet to improve the accessibility of the nominations process to people with learning difficulties
- launching a new dedicated and accessible honours website to promote the inclusivity of the honours system
- offering information about the honours system in accessible formats
- working with disabled people's organisations to promote the honours system

## **New campaigns to inspire social change across the UK**

Public awareness campaigns have a major role to play in driving social change.

We know that campaigns to tackle the stigma associated with loneliness and mental health conditions have successfully raised awareness

of these issues and inspired thousands of people to take action.

We will take action to change perceptions of disabled people and to inspire wider social change.

**The Disability Unit will develop a UK-wide campaign to increase public awareness and understanding of disability, dispel ingrained and unhelpful stereotypes and promote the diverse contributions disabled people have made – and continue to make – to public life.**



**1 in 4 disabled people say negative attitudes from other passengers stop them using public transport.<sup>22</sup>**

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22 Independent. Confident. Connected: Scope

We will **continue to address negative public attitudes to disabled people on public transport through DfT's £1 million It's everyone's journey campaign.** The campaign benefits everyone who uses public transport, highlighting that we can all play a part in making transport more inclusive.



**These broader campaigns will be complemented by the first ever national initiative to raise understanding of autism, led by DHSC.**

A survey by the National Autistic Society in 2015 showed that 99.5% of people had heard of autism,<sup>23</sup> but only 16% of autistic people and their families thought the public understood autism.

**DHSC will develop an autism public understanding initiative by autumn 2021, working with autistic people and their families and the voluntary sector.**

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23 YouGov and the National Autistic Society (2015)

DHSC will trial and evaluate the impact of the initiative by May 2022.

This initiative will help the public to understand the strengths and positives of being autistic, as well as the challenges people might face in their daily lives. It will also emphasise the diversity of the autistic community, including the presentation of autism in women and girls, the LGBT community and autistic people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

## Improving access to justice

Access to justice is important for disabled and non-disabled people alike. Disabled people can face particular challenges in both the civil and criminal justice systems, whether as victims, witnesses, defendants, or offenders.



**MoJ reported in 2018 that most legal aid clients identified as disabled (58%).<sup>24</sup>**

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<sup>24</sup> Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)

To improve disabled people's experience of the justice system, we will:

- improve access to courts and legal support
- support disabled victims and witnesses
- improve frontline staff's understanding of neurodiversity

## **Improving access to courts and legal support**

### **HMCTS Reform**

The HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) reform programme will change how people access the courts. There will be more online provision, including remote hearings and investment in buildings to make them more accessible.

New online HMCTS services are designed and tested with disabled people. This helps to design accessible services so that those with assistive technology can self-serve and simplify language to reduce the cognitive load for users.



**This year (2021), HMCTS will launch a new national support service for users in England and Wales who need help to access online services.**

This means that support will be provided in person and remotely via phone and other technology.

## **Intermediaries**

Intermediaries are impartial communication specialists responsible for enabling communication with disabled people, amongst others, in the justice system. They support disabled people, if their ability to communicate is impaired due to age or incapacity, in order to improve the quality of evidence and to make sure disabled people can understand and participate in the proceedings.

**MoJ is reviewing intermediary provision across the justice system and will share recommendations regarding the future of intermediary provision by spring 2022.**

## Supporting disabled victims and witnesses

MoJ is working to remove the barriers for those with protected characteristics to access support, including disabled people who are victims or witnesses.

**MoJ brought a new revised Victim's Code into force in England and Wales on 1st April 2021, which sets out enhanced rights for disabled people, as well as other victims.**

The Code brings together 12 overarching rights that are straightforward, concise and easy to understand – outlining the minimum level of information and service victims can expect at every stage of the justice process. These include:

- for the first time, eligible victims will be automatically referred to the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) and offered a Victim Liaison Officer (VLO), who provides vital updates on offenders as they serve their sentence, including their potential release from prison

- the ability for vulnerable victims to have their cross-examination pre-recorded away from the courtroom – reducing the stress of giving evidence in court, which many find intimidating
- the right to be informed the reasons why a suspect will not be prosecuted. If unhappy, victims will also be able to ask the police or Crown Prosecution Service to review this decision

## **Improving frontline staff's understanding of neurodiversity**

Staff awareness and understanding is a key enabler for better outcomes for neurodivergent offenders.

Neurodivergent people such as autistic people, dyslexics and people with learning disabilities are over-represented in the criminal justice system. For example, around 28% of offenders are assessed to have a learning difficulty or challenge,<sup>25</sup> and we know that the experience of courts, prisons and probation can represent

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<sup>25</sup> Identified Needs of Offenders in Custody and the Community from OASys 2019

particular challenges for neurodivergent individuals.

MoJ is helping create cultural change in how the criminal justice system responds to neurodivergent conditions through a nationwide, evidence-based approach to neurodiversity, with a key focus on staff awareness.

MoJ has therefore asked HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Probation, with support from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, to carry out an independent review of neurodiversity in the criminal justice system.

**MoJ will work with disability organisations to develop a national neurodiversity training toolkit for staff, which will be rolled out in 2022.**

## **Tackling crime against disabled people**

Disabled people are disproportionately affected by crime. Disabled adults are more likely to be victims of crime (20.8%) than other adults

(19.0%), and disabled children aged 10 to 15 (12.0%) are almost twice as likely to be victims of crime than other children (6.3%).<sup>26</sup>

Disabled women are more likely to experience domestic abuse and sexual assault than non-disabled women. Those with mental health conditions, learning difficulties and social and behavioural impairments are most frequently victimised.<sup>27</sup>

About half of disabled people report feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood (45%), worrying about being insulted or harassed in the street or any other public place (54%), or worrying about being physically attacked by strangers (45%) at least 'some of the time'.<sup>28</sup>

At the most extreme, negative attitudes to disabled people can manifest in disability hate crime.

The number of disability hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales have increased from 1,676 in 2011 to 2012 to 8,469 in 2019 to 2020.<sup>29</sup> While this rise is in part due to the

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26 Crime in England and Wales: Annual Trend and Demographic Tables

27 Disability and Crime, England and Wales: 2020

28 UK Disability Survey

29 Official Statistics: Hate crime, England and Wales, 2019 to 2020

increased willingness of some victims to come forward and improved police recording practices, it is likely that many disability hate crimes go unreported.

We are committed to tackling disability hate crime.

**In 2021, the Home Office will publish a new cross-government strategy to tackle the crime and disorder that undermines the quality of life for everyone. This will include tackling hate crime, of which tackling disability hate crime will be an integral part.**

**The Home Office commits to work with disabled people and other disability stakeholders to develop the new strategy for publication in the autumn.**

The government will also carefully consider the Law Commission's recommendations from its comprehensive review of hate crime laws, due to report in late 2021. To support this work:

**The Crown Prosecution Service will bring together a panel consisting of disabled people's organisations, academics, partner agencies from government and the police, to advise on further improvements covering support to prosecutors and the Policy Statement on Disability Hate Crime and Other Crimes against Disabled People.**

Justice is devolved in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Executive recognises the importance of improving disabled peoples' experiences of reporting hate crimes. The Northern Ireland Executive, together with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), fund the Hate Crime Advocacy Service. This offers victims of disability hate crime access to a disability advocate who provides support through the investigation process, ensuring access to justice and safety in their own community.

The Scottish Government engaged closely with DPOs, Police Scotland and other justice partners to develop the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, which received Royal Assent in April 2021. DPOs were also engaged in the development of hate crime awareness raising

campaigns, and on work to improve data and evidence and on third party reporting.

In 2020, the Welsh Government funded All Wales People First to lead a hate crime consultation with its network of adults with learning disabilities across all local authorities in Wales. This helped build a picture of their experiences and understanding of hate crime; findings will help inform future policy. The Welsh Government consulted with disabled people via focus groups when developing the communication campaign Hate Hurts Wales, which aimed to raise awareness and reporting of hate crime, including disability hate crime.

We are committed to doing more to tackle crime against disabled people and the Disability Unit will identify areas where the government can go further in tackling this issue in 2021 to 2022.

## **Ensuring protection at home**

Millions of disabled people receive excellent support in their own homes from paid, unpaid and voluntary carers. We know this is greatly valued, helping disabled people with a multitude



of day to day tasks and to live more independent and fulfilling lives.

However we are concerned that disabled people have told us that existing measures to protect victims of abuse by people providing care are not working well. We are committed to addressing any instances of abuse or exploitation.

**The Home Office and DHSC will jointly lead a review into the protections and support available to adults abused in their own homes by people providing their care, coordinating inputs from wider government, disabled people, carers organisations and other interested parties. We expect the review to complete by end 2022.**



## **Housing: creating more accessible, adapted and safer homes**

Many disabled people wake up every morning in a home that is not adapted to their needs.

Nearly half (47%) of disabled respondents to the UK Disability Survey reported having at least ‘some difficulty’ getting in and out of where they live.

There have been many improvements in accessibility for disabled people in recent decades, aided by tightened regulations and increased awareness of inclusive design.



**The proportion of homes in England with key accessible features nearly doubled between 2009 and 2018, from 5% to 9%.<sup>30</sup>**

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30 English Housing Survey 2018 to 2019: accessibility of English Homes

Disabled people tell us that there is much further still to go. The evidence tells a similar story. Less than half of the local plans in England for new homes include requirements for a proportion of new homes to meet higher accessibility standards.<sup>31</sup>

A decent home is the foundation for an independent life. A quarter of people receiving equipment or minor adaptations to their home needed less help than previously. 95% said their quality of life was better after receiving equipment or a minor adaptation.<sup>32</sup>

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31 Habinteg: Accessible Housing in Local Plans

32 Personal Social Services Survey of Adults Receiving Community Equipment and Minor Adaptations – 2007–08

**“My son left college at 22, and we worked with Sheffield Council concerning his independence and supported living. A transition social worker supported him to find suitable accommodation, along with MySafeHome, and he purchased a home with DWP support. It is the best thing we have ever done for my son. He loves his home, and has developed independence skills way above our expectations. He has support 24 hours a day, and this whole success has given us peace of mind for his future.”**

**– Sue**

We will take immediate steps to:

- boost the supply of housing for disabled people by raising accessibility standards for new homes, increasing the supply of affordable homes, including supported housing, and accelerating the adaptation of existing homes by improving the efficiency of local authority delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant, worth £573 million in 2021/22
- extend disabled tenants’ rights on accessibility

- ensure the safety of disabled people in buildings, for when there are emergencies

## **Boosting the accessibility and supply of housing for disabled people**

A decent home will mean different things to different people. A home with good public transport, close to family and friends, can be as important as a home with the right adaptations. Driving choice is key.

**“It’s so important to see things and still be part of the world.”**

**– Tony**

MHCLG completed a consultation<sup>33</sup> on raising accessibility standards for new homes in England in December 2020, and has been considering the responses and next steps.

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33 Raising accessibility standards for new homes

**MHCLG will confirm plans to improve the framework to deliver accessible new homes by December 2021.**

These reforms must be informed by robust data and evidence of disabled people's experiences.

**MHCLG is commissioning new research to develop the statutory guidance on meeting Building Regulations, covering access to and use of buildings (Approved Document M).**

The research will help us to improve guidance and inform future policy. It will consider modern building design approaches, technology, and building use and operation.

Northern Ireland is taking a different approach to increase choice for disabled people in both social and private housing. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is developing an Accessible Housing Register for social housing. It is also exploring a possible private sector interface, allowing accessible private sector properties for rent or sale to be advertised on the NIHE website.

The Scottish Government's 'Housing to 2040' route map (published 2021) will introduce a new Accessible Homes Standard to ensure accessibility and adaptability for all new and existing homes. The new standard will deliver a step change in the availability and adaptability of housing for disabled people.

We will take steps to increase the supply of affordable and supported housing.

Purpose-built supported housing with integrated care services can help disabled people live independently.

There is increasing demand for supported housing,<sup>34</sup> and we are committed to boosting supply through the Affordable Homes Programme.

**MHCLG has committed that 10% of the 180,000 homes built through the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme 2021–26 will be for supported housing.**

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34 Projected Demand for Supported Housing in Great Britain 2015 to 2030: Economics of Health and Social Care Systems Policy Research Unit. March 2017

DHSC also provides funding to build specialised housing – through the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CASSH) Fund. This is designed to help adults with a learning or physical disability, those with mental health conditions and older people.

**DHSC, working with MHCLG, will invest £71 million in the CASSH Fund in financial year 2021 to 2022.**

These schemes will help to meet the growing demand for supported housing. We will continue to work with the supported housing sector to ensure that disabled and older people with support and care needs have the right housing options.

We recognise the autonomy that home ownership can provide and want to ensure that disabled people, too, have the opportunity to own their own home.

About half of the homes delivered under the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes programme will be open to a new Shared Ownership scheme. The programme will also unlock a further £38 billion



in public and private investment in affordable housing. This will help aspiring homeowners to take their first step on to the housing ladder. We have reduced the initial stake from 25% to 10% and introduced support for shared owners with the cost of repairs and maintenance for the first 10 years on new build homes.

For people unable to access the new standard Shared Ownership model on new build homes, there is the home ownership for people with long-term disabilities (HOLD) scheme. This allows people to buy a suitable home on the open market on Shared Ownership terms.

**MHCLG will make the new Shared Ownership model, including the reduced (10%) minimum initial stake, available to disabled people buying a home under the HOLD scheme.**

Residents living in the new rented homes funded by the Affordable Homes Programme 2021–26 will also have the Right to Shared Ownership.

Disabled Facilities Grants, available via local councils in England and Wales, can help disabled

people meet the cost of adaptations needed to make their homes more accessible.

**“To actually go out of the door, without anyone helping me, was incredible.”**

**– Joyce**

We will accelerate the delivery of home adaptations in England and Wales by improving local delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant.

**Following an independent review of the Disabled Facilities Grant published in December 2018,<sup>35</sup> MHCLG and DHSC will jointly publish new government guidance for local authorities in England on effective delivery of the £573 million Disabled Facilities Grant during 2021.**

This investment supports our commitment to help older and disabled people to live safely and independently in their own homes.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-and-other-adaptations-external-review>



**By the end of the 2021 to 2022 financial year, we will have invested over £4 billion in the Disabled Facilities Grant since 2010.**

## **Extending tenants' rights on accessibility**

Disabled people are more likely to rent, rather than own, their homes.

The Equality Act 2010 included provisions to give tenants the right to require landlords to make reasonable adjustments to the common parts of residential buildings, including hallways, entrances and stairs.<sup>36</sup> This provision will now be brought into force in England and Wales.

**The Cabinet Office will progress work to require landlords to make reasonable adjustments to the common parts of leasehold and commonhold homes. A consultation is planned for 2021.**

This will make it easier for disabled people to enter and leave their homes.

Landlords will be allowed to get tenants to pay for the work, in line with the Equality Act existing legislation. Tenants and residents, including those on low incomes or with disabled children, will be able to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

## **Ensuring the safety of disabled people**

Building regulations guidance (Approved Document B) includes provisions for assisted escape for disabled people. While MHCLG concluded in 2015 that the provisions in these regulations met minimum requirements there are nonetheless opportunities to go further.

MHCLG is now reviewing the evidence around means of escape for disabled people, the effectiveness of Approved Document B and possible alternative approaches.

**MHCLG has commissioned new research to develop robust evidence to inform policy in England on the means of escape from buildings, care homes and specialised housing for disabled people. This will conclude by autumn 2021.**



## Transport: improving the accessibility and experience of everyday journeys

Everyday journeys – to work, school, to see family and friends, to access essential services like health and care – are fraught with uncertainty for many disabled people.

**“The world is different. You have to book if you want to use a bus; you have to book if you want to get a train. [Spontaneity] ... is a luxury.”**

**– Jessica**

The Department for Transport’s (DfT) Inclusive Transport Strategy, first published in 2018, has helped accelerate progress. However the challenges are often significant and we acknowledge there is a lot still to do. 99% of buses now meet minimum accessibility standards,<sup>37</sup> but the proportion of wheelchair

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37 Annual Bus Statistics 2019

accessible vehicles is just 58% in taxi fleets and 2% for private hire vehicles.<sup>38</sup> Disappointingly, these figures have been falling since 2014.

Disabled people are frequent users of public transport, as well as taxis and private hire vehicles.<sup>39</sup>

Transport infrastructure (access to toilets, passenger information, signage) is as important as access to transport vehicles.<sup>40</sup> On the roads, disabled people say that streetscapes can present problems, including kerb issues, street furniture and pop-up infrastructure.<sup>41</sup>

Our determination to deliver a transport system which is accessible for all remains unchanged. We know from our own lived experience research<sup>42</sup> that reliable transport can be transformational in living an independent life.

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38 Taxi and private hire vehicle statistics, England 2020

39 **Disabled People's Travel Behaviour and Attitudes to Travel 2017**

40 **Disabled rail passengers research 2019 (Illuminas)**

41 Disability Unit and Policy Lab Lived Experience Research 2019

42 Disability Unit and Policy Lab Lived Experience Research 2019

**“Throughout my early childhood I was really clumsy and lacked co-ordination, eventually, at the age of 10, I was diagnosed as having Becker Muscular Dystrophy. The condition was stable for a while, but at 16 my mobility started to worsen. I started college but was dependent on my parents as I was unable to access public transport. Then I was made aware of the Mobility Allowance (the predecessor of DLA and PIP), which I applied for and successfully obtained. The opportunities it opened up for me were truly life changing, it enabled me to access a vehicle via Motability and gave me independence for the first time in my life.”**

**– Carl**

We will take further steps to:

- tackle persistent accessibility issues across the transport network, including rail, buses, taxis and roads



- enable disabled people to travel with confidence by addressing staff training, information and the attitudes and behaviours of others

## Transforming the accessibility of the railway station network

The Access for All programme was launched in 2006 to address the issues faced by disabled passengers when using railway stations in England, Scotland and Wales.

It has so far provided accessible, step-free routes at over 200 stations, alongside smaller scale improvements at more than 1,500 stations.



**As a result, over three quarters of rail journeys are now through step-free stations, compared with only half in 2005.**

We published the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail in May 2021, which commits to the establishment of a new rail body, Great British Railways. The white paper contains a suite of accessibility reforms, including:

- a statutory duty on Great British Railways to improve accessibility
- the development and implementation of a new national accessibility strategy for the railways

This strategy will provide the first, joined-up, system-wide approach to accessibility, including getting to, from and around stations and on and off trains.

But still, only around one-fifth of our 2,500 stations have step-free access to and between all platforms. Unlike railway vehicles, which must be legally accessible by 2020, there is no legally binding end date for making stations accessible.

**DfT will conduct a network-wide accessibility audit of station facilities at all 2,565 mainline railway stations in Great Britain to inform future investment decisions.**

Transport is a partially devolved issue, allowing Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to benefit from UK wide infrastructure investment while also responding to local needs.

Transport for Wales is delivering a £700 million Metro Transformation project on Core Valley Lines. Jointly funded by the Welsh Government, the UK government, Cardiff City Region and the European Union, this will provide step-free access to Welsh stations within scope and step-free boarding and disembarking on new rolling stock trains.

This is only part of the work underway to improve rail station accessibility.

**DfT will consult on an update to the Design Standards for Accessible Stations this year (2021).**

People with sight issues have told us how valuable tactile paving is on station platforms. It can help to avert tragedies. However, many stations still do not have this. We are committed to addressing this.

**DfT will work with Network Rail to develop proposals for the accelerated upgrade of rail station platforms with tactile paving.**

# Improving disabled people's experience of travelling by train

**“Public transport is a major issue for disabled people – there are countless barriers to accessing trains, tubes, taxis, buses etc. Manual boarding ramps aren’t good enough – that’s not genuine independence, especially when staff can treat you like a nuisance when you want to turn up and go (we have a right to spontaneous travel too). The majority of train and tube stations aren’t even accessible, that needs to change.”**

**– UK Disability Survey respondent**

Disabled passengers have told us that there are 3 things needed for their rail journeys to go well:

- information to make informed decisions
- equality of experience
- control over their journey

DfT will bring forward plans to improve disabled people's experience of travelling by train.

**DfT will work closely with rail companies<sup>43</sup> to further develop the Passenger Assist Programme for disabled passengers, to increase people's confidence to travel. This will include introducing a passenger assist app this year (2021).**

Some disabled passengers describe their experiences of travelling by train as anxiety-inducing.

Other than the emergency contact equipment fitted in or near to the wheelchair spaces, the only means of alerting staff if they need assistance is to physically find the guard or train manager or to contact the operator through social media.

This can lead disabled passengers to worry that they will not be able to ask for or get help when they need it. It can undermine the confidence of disabled people to travel independently at all.

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43 The Rail Delivery Group, which brings together the companies that run British railways to tackle shared issues

**DfT has invited innovative project ideas to improve communication for disabled passengers and others with reduced mobility on rail services across Great Britain. This will enable people to contact train crew members directly from any seat on the train. Contracts will be awarded by July 2021.**

The difficulty in contacting staff for assistance is a recognised issue for disabled people across the UK. Similar work to address this is also taking place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In April 2021, ScotRail's passenger assist service reduced its assistance booking notice period to 1 hour, and the introduction of a BSL app has significantly improved frontline staff communication with BSL users.

A Hate Crime Charter, developed in 2021 with DPOs, encourages transport providers, the public and other services to adopt a zero tolerance approach to hate crime on public transport and report crimes.

## **Improving the accessibility of buses, bus stations and bus stops**

We want disabled people to be able to complete bus journeys independently and with confidence. Audible and visible next stop announcements can make it easier for everyone to use buses.

**As announced in Bus Back Better, the National Bus Strategy for England, subject to final analysis, DfT will introduce regulations by Summer 2022 to require bus companies to provide audible and visual announcements onboard their services in Great Britain.**

In the meantime, we encourage bus operators to provide accessible information onboard their services when introducing new or upgraded vehicles.

DfT has already committed £2 million to help the smallest bus companies to provide audible and visible information on services.

**DfT will invest a further £1.5 million during 2021. This funding will be available to bus operators across Great Britain.**

Under the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, buses and coaches designed to carry over 22 passengers, and which are used on local and scheduled services in the UK, must incorporate:

- at least 1 wheelchair space
- a lift or ramp
- priority seating
- colour-contrasting handholds and step edges

The needs and expectations of disabled people are likely to have changed in the last 20 years.

**DfT will review the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, starting with research in 2022. The department will also commission research into the design of bus stations and bus stops in England by April 2022.**



We are committed to supporting inclusive bus and coach services which enable all passengers, disabled and non-disabled alike, to travel with confidence.

## **Tackling shortages in community transport drivers**

Community Transport services are essential for many people's independence, yet we know that some organisations struggle to recruit drivers qualified to drive their vehicles.

**DfT will work with the Community Transport Association and with other stakeholders to understand this issue better, and to support the sector to continue its vital work.**

## **Improving the accessibility of taxis and private hire vehicles**

Current protection for disabled people using taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) is patchy.

Except where drivers have a medical exemption, it is an offence to refuse a wheelchair user

access to a designated wheelchair accessible vehicle. It is similarly an offence to refuse an assistance dog owner access to any vehicle. But other disabled people do not share the same protections.

Disabled people continue to report being discriminated against by taxi and PHV drivers or not given necessary assistance.<sup>44</sup>

**DfT will take forward legislation during the current Parliament to strengthen the law on the carriage of disabled people in taxis and PHVs across Great Britain. This will ensure protection from overcharging and the provision of appropriate assistance, regardless of the service they choose to use.**

We also recognise how important it is that local authorities, taxi and PHV drivers understand the needs and expectations of disabled customers, and how to support them appropriately.

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44 DPTAC position on taxis and PHVs

**DfT will continue to encourage local authorities to require drivers to complete disability awareness training.**

**DfT will, as soon as legislative time allows, mandate the completion of disability awareness training through new National Minimum Standards for taxi and PHV licensing. In the meantime, the department will consult during 2021 on updated guidance for licensing authorities, including strengthening recommendations on supporting an inclusive service.**

## **Making ‘lifeline’ ports more accessible for disabled passengers**

Disabled residents on the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly rely on ferry services to connect with the UK mainland for work, leisure and access to essential services, such as healthcare.

**DfT will provide up to £1 million to improve the accessibility of lifeline seaports on the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly for disabled people, with ports invited to apply for funding for improvements in the financial year 2021 to 2022.**

## **Creating accessibility standards for electric vehicle charge points**

There is almost no accessibility regulation covering electric vehicle (EV) charging points. We have an opportunity to build in accessibility to an emerging service.

DfT recently consulted on improving the consumer experience at public charge points.<sup>45</sup> This includes improving the accessibility for all users, to understand the challenges facing EV drivers.

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-consumer-experience-at-public-electric-vehicle-chargepoints>

**DfT will work with consumer groups and charge point operators to set clear accessibility standards for charging infrastructure in 2021 to 2022.**

## **Improving the Blue Badge scheme**

The Blue Badge scheme supports the mobility of over 2 million people in the UK, helping them to park closer to the goods and services they need to use. In 2019, in the biggest change to the scheme in over 40 years, we extended eligibility in England to people with non-visible disabilities. We have reviewed how those changes have worked and found that, while many people are benefiting from badges for the first time, aspects of the scheme could be improved.

**DfT is improving the online application process, and will continue work with Blue Badge users and the local authorities that administer the scheme in England to ensure that it works in the best possible way for all users.**

## **Tackling pavement parking**

Pavement parking can cause real problems for pedestrians, especially for people with sight or mobility impairments. Tackling pavement parking would help free pavements for vulnerable pedestrians to make journeys safely and more easily. It would reduce the occasions when pedestrians are forced into the road to navigate around vehicles. It would also reduce pavement damage that can pose a trip hazard. Scotland has passed legislation to control pavement parking and Wales has announced plans for new regulations.

**DfT has consulted on options to help local authorities address the problem more effectively and will announce next steps later this year (2021).**



## **Jobs: making the world of work more inclusive and accessible**

The working week is a distant reality for too many disabled people.

**“I’ve never had trouble going to interviews, dealing with them, carrying them out. The biggest problem comes after the interview because employers will make any sort of excuse not to take the leap of faith, they don’t want to take the risk on you.”**

**– Les**

Work is not an option for all disabled people, but many disabled people who can and want to work find themselves excluded from the workplace. 56% of disabled people who are not employed who responded to the UK Disability Survey ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that they would like more support in finding a job.<sup>46</sup>

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46 UK Disability Survey 2021

There are 7 million working-age people with a disability or long-term health condition in the UK,<sup>47</sup> but only a little over half are in work.

Legislative reform has driven progress. The Disability Discrimination Act, introduced in 1995, and its successor the Equality Act 2010, made disabled people's rights clearer. It is against the law for employers to discriminate against a person because of a disability. An employer must also make 'reasonable adjustments' to the way employment is structured.

In 2017, we set a goal to see 1 million more disabled people in work by 2027. In the three years since, the number of disabled people in work has grown by 800,000. We remain committed to achieving the challenging goal of 1 million more disabled people in work and, once we have, we will work with disabled people and their representatives to think about how we can build on this success.

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47 Family Resources Survey: financial year 2019 to 2020





**The disability employment gap has narrowed significantly in recent years, from 33.8 percentage points in 2014 to 28.6 percentage points in 2021.<sup>48</sup>**

Despite this progress, too many disabled people still find themselves excluded from the job market, leaving them feeling that their talents and qualifications are being wasted. Less than half (48%) of the employed disabled people who responded to the UK Disability Survey ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their employer is flexible and makes sufficient reasonable adjustments for disabled people. Only a quarter (24%) ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their promotion opportunities are the same as their colleagues.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy has also had an impact on disabled people’s work. Disabled people are one of

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48 Labour market status of disabled people, ONS, January to March 2021 data, published May 2021. This data is based on the Annual Population Survey (APS) or Labour Force Survey (LFS) which are weighted to official population estimates and projections that do not currently reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Rates published from the APS and LFS remain robust and reliable, however levels and changes in levels should be used with caution. The ONS is analysing the population totals used in the weighting process and is planning to reweight the LFS and APS in future as outlined in this blog.

the groups more likely to have experienced a reduction in earnings through redundancy, a reduction in hours, or being furloughed.<sup>49</sup>

We know that good work supports good health and independence.

**“As a Deaf professional, work has enabled me to achieve my aspirations and to feel that I am making worthwhile contributions to society. I face many challenges, obstacles and the highs and lows of working across such demanding employment. For me, having Access to Work has been invaluable, this enables me to employ a pool of preferred British Sign Language interpreters, we work together as professionals to ensure high standards, quality and consistency across my 2 roles. If it wasn’t for them, I think this would have had a huge detrimental impact on my life, my circumstances would be very different to the way I am living today.”**

**– Claire**

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49 Blundell, R., Joyce, R., Costa Dias, M. and Xu, X. (2020), COVID-19: the impacts of the pandemic on inequality, Institute for Fiscal Studies. Social Metrics Commission (2020), Poverty and COVID-19.

We are ambitious to go further. We will:

- set out proposals to improve support for disabled people to start or stay in work
- create an Access to Work Adjustments Passport to support disabled people with their transition into employment, including disabled students leaving education
- encourage employers to recruit, retain and progress their disabled employees and to create inclusive workplaces by reviewing Disability Confident, promoting the Voluntary Reporting Framework and consulting on taking this further, and disseminating best practice to employers
- scale up supported employment services
- strengthen rights in the workplace, encouraging flexible working and introducing carers' leave, and improving access to advice on employment rights for disabled people and employers
- explore with disabled people what extra help would be most useful for those wishing to start a business

- champion opportunities for disabled people in the Civil Service and ensure the support to thrive at work
- create more opportunities for disabled people to serve in the armed forces and the agencies

## **More support for disabled people to start and stay in work**

We want to do more to support disabled people and people with health conditions to start and stay in work. To be truly effective, a range of support is required. This includes earlier back-to-work support and help staying in work where possible, ensuring our Jobcentres are engaging, welcoming and expert, and personalising support to recognise that one size does not fit all.

**To reduce the chance of people being out of work in the long term, DWP will explore offering earlier and more intensive back-to-work support in Jobcentres for people before their work capability assessment (WCA).**

This support would go beyond the existing 'Health and Work Conversation' which people take part in before their WCA takes place.

Where people have recently fallen out of work because of a health condition or disability, Jobcentres could do more to help people to consider appropriate alternative employment opportunities and raise awareness of in-work support. This could involve more support from a person's work coach, more often and earlier in the claim.

DWP is looking at a range of options from continuing to make Jobcentres more welcoming to asking what more can be done to encourage voluntary take up of employment support.

**DWP is introducing a new approach to conditionality for disabled people and people with health conditions, aiming to enable an honest and open conversation between a person and their work coach about what they can do.**

The aim is to build commitment to move towards work and into work where possible. Work coaches start by applying no mandatory requirements but agree with the person the voluntary steps the person will take. These could include, for example, developing a CV or looking for suitable jobs online. Using their discretion, work coaches apply mandatory requirements only if they are needed.

Because health and employment are related, DWP wants to do more to join up employment support with health services. DWP is continuing to build on current evidence based programmes that provide specialised support to disabled people and people with health conditions. For people with complex barriers who need more intensive, personalised support, DWP introduced the Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) programme in 2019 in England and Wales.

**From August 2021, to meet an anticipated rise in need for support as a result of COVID-19, DWP will increase places on IPES by 25%. This will help ensure that more disabled people and people with health conditions will be able to rapidly access appropriate tailored support.**

## **Transforming Access to Work**

Access to Work provides support for disabled people at work that is not covered by employers' responsibility to make reasonable adjustments. This could include special equipment, support worker services, or help getting to and from work.

DWP is committed to transforming Access to Work. DWP is working to make Access to Work a digital service, fit for the 21st century, which is innovative, visible and accessible. DWP will radically improve employers and disabled people's experience of using the service, including improving the payment process for employers and streamlining the user journey.

The department has already introduced the following improvements to the service:

- 24/7 online Access to Work application to enable disabled people and employers to choose a time that is convenient for them to make their application
- a digital renewal process with a text or email reminder service to ensure continuity of support
- a fully digital Communication Support Interview customer journey process
- updated Access to Work staff guidance, ensuring stakeholder feedback is incorporated and that social model language is used throughout the guidance

We recognise we must go further.

**DWP is working with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities via the Access to Work Stakeholder Forums to develop an Access to Work Adjustments Passport, which will be piloted during 2021.**



The Access to Work adjustments passport will provide disabled people with greater flexibility and smooth transitions between job roles. It will provide an indicative overview for employers of the possible support available from Access to Work, which will help build employer understanding of disability and adjustments. It will transform the Access to Work customer journey by reducing the need for repeated assessments where the individual's needs remain the same, enable a seamless transition and set the expectation with employers that tailored specialist aids and appliances will follow the passport holder when they change jobs.

To test the passport, DWP is carrying out a series of pilots with:

- young people who are transitioning from education to work, or from work back to education, for example in order to retrain or upskill
- veterans leaving the armed forces
- freelancers and contractors moving between job roles

We will build on the lessons learned from the pilots to inform future development.

**We will make available a passport for all disabled students (including those receiving Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)), when they leave university.**

This will provide disabled young people with the confidence and certainty they need as they enter the world of work.

DWP is committed to improving awareness of Access to Work. The department has delivered a paid communication campaign to do this and to widen the reach to increase take-up of grants. DWP has begun a renewed effort to ensure disabled people are aware of the benefits of Access to Work.

**DWP will review the effectiveness of the campaign to ensure activities that have achieved the greatest reach are taken forward in future campaigns.**

The passport will help to deliver our ambition to actively raise awareness of Access to Work in schools and universities, to enable young disabled people to make informed career choices and achieve their aspirations.

DWP is committed to improving the offer for disabled people. It has actively worked with stakeholders and disability organisations to cascade information about Access to Work and to ensure disabled people's views are captured. This partnership working led to the introduction of a new flexible offer in 2020, including:

- enabling disabled people to work flexibly from more than one location
- a package of home working support which can be blended with workplace support
- mental health wellbeing support for people returning to work
- travel-to-work support for those who may no longer be able to safely travel by public transport due to the nature of their disability

Building on this co-production, we are working with stakeholders to see what more Access to Work can do to support disabled people who have the most significant barriers to employment. Building on the learning from our work with Supported Businesses and using their experiences of supporting disabled employees, we are keen to go further and gain insight into how Access to Work could be used to open up employment opportunities for disabled people who require extensive adjustments to work.

**DWP will test whether providing additional support for employers, who are willing to do more and flex job roles for those who need more than standard Access to Work, can open up job opportunities for disabled people. DWP will run a Proof of Concept to gain insight into the difference this approach can make.**

## Encouraging employers

A supportive employer can make a huge difference to disabled people.



**Approximately 55% of disabled people are of working age.<sup>50</sup>**

**“I had no idea I was on the autistic spectrum until I watched a documentary on Channel 4 called ‘Are you autistic?’, what I saw really rang true with my experiences of life. This started me on the journey to being diagnosed. I was then able to sit down with a manager at Sainsburys, which gave me a chance to reflect on my challenges at work, and also look at ways of making my job easier. I wear ear defenders to cut out the noise on the shop floor to avoid too much sensory overload. I can also leave the shop floor for 10 mins or so if it gets too much. It’s also about getting clear and specific instructions from people to do my job.”**

**– Roy**

50 DWP Family Resources Survey: financial year 2019 to 2020

We want more employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace.

## **Reviewing Disability Confident**

The Disability Confident scheme supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring. It gives employers the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to attract, recruit, retain and progress disabled people in the workplace. Over 20,000 employers have actively engaged with the Disability Confident scheme, covering over 11 million employees.

We remain committed to an initial entry Level 1 which encourages employers of all sizes to begin the Disability Confident journey. However, we would like more employers to progress through the scheme and raise their ambition at Levels 2 and 3.

**DWP will work with the Disability Confident Professional Advisers Group (PAG) and the Business Leaders Group this year to review and strengthen Levels 2 and 3 of the scheme, to support employers to increase disabled people's employment opportunities.**

The review will consider the content of Levels 2 and 3, to ensure it remains up-to-date, credible and sufficiently challenging. It will also explore further ways of encouraging employers to progress through the scheme effectively.

The Disability Confident scheme requires employers to commit to offering an interview to disabled people that meet the minimum criteria for the job, as specified by the employer. As part of the review we will consider how this aspect of the scheme is working out in practice.

The scheme will be updated by the end of this year.

## **Disseminating best practice to employers**

We are committed to ensuring that employers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), have the best possible information and advice to support disabled people in the workplace. Employers have told us, in recent consultations, about shortfalls in the current offer. They report that they sometimes find this fractured, difficult to navigate and hard to apply in practice.

We are working to provide a more tailored offer for employers, that helps employers to support employees in a range of workplace situations. The design process also involves disabled people and SMEs.

**In 2021, DWP will develop and test an improved information and advice offer for employers.**

Best practice will also be shared through Disability Confident.

There is a significant amount of information for Disability Confident employers in the Disability



Confident Employer packs and on GOV.UK. **This content will also be reviewed and updated in 2021 to ensure that it meets the needs of employers.**

These efforts to join up information available to employers will be complemented by wider efforts to inform disabled people and employers about their employment rights.

**The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), working with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), has developed a new online advice hub. From July 2021, its remit is to provide clear, accessible information and advice on employment rights for disabled people.**

The advice hub will be available to both disabled people and employers, providing information and advice on:

- disability discrimination in the workplace
- flexible working
- rights and obligations around reasonable adjustments

- fairness in redundancy situations
- occupational health and mental health conditions

The hub will provide advice to disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales. In Northern Ireland, advice is available through the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

## **Disability Workforce Reporting**

DWP worked with large employers and expert partners to develop a Voluntary Reporting Framework, to help organisations to record and voluntarily report information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. It is aimed at employers with 250 or more employees, though also open to smaller employers who are keen to drive greater transparency in their organisation or industry.

In November 2019, DWP introduced a requirement that new and renewing Disability Confident Leaders (Level 3) would report against the framework.

There is increasing interest in making disability reporting mandatory, particularly for large

employers, whilst recognising the challenges facing businesses. To explore this further, we will seek the views of stakeholders and shape future policy depending on the outcome of that exercise.

**In 2021, Cabinet Office will consult on workforce reporting on disability for large employers, exploring voluntary and mandated workplace transparency, and publish a set of next steps.**

The consultation will consider:

- how employers can better understand the profile of their workforce in terms of disability
- using a standardised question when asking employees about their disability status
- the type of information and data employers could collect and ways to do this in a standardised manner
- what information may already be held and cost issues
- tools and guidance to help employers report in a consistent and effective way

- lessons learned from existing reporting frameworks
- ways to maximise take up and employer engagement
- what might be reported to government, and whether the government should publish it

Alongside the consultation, we will continue to raise awareness and encourage take up of the Voluntary Reporting Framework, including promoting the business benefits of reporting.

DWP will promote the framework and benefits of reporting by:

- using its social-media channels, Jobcentre Plus networks, and Disability Confident employer networks and newsletters
- working with partners across government, such as with BEIS and HMRC, and with the private and voluntary sectors
- inviting supporters of the Voluntary Reporting Framework to outline their approach and the benefits as they see it through case studies

In addition, we will highlight the business benefits of workforce reporting as part of wider

discussions on developing inclusive workplace cultures, to encourage a more open approach.

## **Expanding supported employment services**

DWP is committed to expanding successful Individual Placement and Support (IPS) trials that use an evidence based approach. IPS provides support to move people with health conditions into work quickly, and support them to stay there. The DWP will also expand use of the place, train and maintain supported employment model in partnership with local authorities.

**DWP will fund a local supported employment trailblazer, working with 20 local authorities, expected to begin in autumn 2021.**

The trailblazer will support approximately 1,200 people. At least two thirds of participants will be people with a learning disability and autistic people who use local authority social services. People with learning disabilities face particular barriers to employment, with only 6% of people with learning disabilities currently in work.

## Strengthening rights for disabled people in the workplace

Flexible working can make all the difference for disabled people.

**“I started my career at KPMG in 2014 as a financial modeller. 18 months later I had a massive stroke and was left with no feeling on my left hand side, using a wheelchair. Work has been fantastic supporting me. My return to work was based from home originally and then I went back into the office part time. I was working remotely before COVID but it has now given me the opportunity to do international work that I never would have been able to do before. I am open and honest to the firm about my day to day experiences. I lead from the front to provide that voice and to support others to have confidence to open up about their experiences as well. Work has been one of the best rehabs. It has helped my self-esteem and improved my memory and concentration.”**

**– Tom**

We want to make it easier for disabled people to work flexibly, if they would like to do so.

The experience of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the importance of choice. While fewer disabled people than non-disabled people stated finding working from home difficult (11% for disabled and 21% for non-disabled<sup>51</sup>), working from home is not suitable for everyone.

**“My adapted office chair will take up half a living room or half a bedroom, and I already have the wheelchair in my bedroom so it just doesn’t work.”**

**– Diane**

BEIS is reviewing the statutory right to request flexible working.

We are committed, subject to consultation, to make flexible working the default, unless employers have good reasons not to.

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51 **ONS publication** ‘Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: February 2021’.

**BEIS will launch a consultation by the end of 2021 on making flexible working the default in Great Britain, unless employers have good reasons not to.**

## **Introducing unpaid carers' leave**

We know that many people caring informally for disabled people are balancing this with work commitments.

Many employers are supportive: 54% of employed carers who responded to the UK Disability Survey 'agree' or 'strongly agree' their employer is supportive of their caring responsibilities, although only 26% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that their promotion opportunities are the same as their colleagues.

We are committed to introducing an entitlement to leave for unpaid carers of up to 1 week, and have since completed a consultation.



**BEIS will set out next steps in progressing the government's commitment to introduce unpaid carers' leave across Great Britain by the end of 2021.**

This new entitlement will help unpaid carers to balance their caring responsibilities with paid employment.

## **Supporting disabled entrepreneurs**

Starting and growing a business takes courage, commitment, and a lot of hard work. The idea is perhaps the easy part. Creating a business plan, sorting out financing, marketing, building a team – the 'things to do' list will be long.

In return, entrepreneurs enjoy the satisfaction of making their own way, with independence and flexibility.

Disabled people share the same aspirations. We want to help more disabled people realise their potential through this route.

**BEIS will publish proposals by the end of 2021 to ensure that every disabled person who wants to start a business has the opportunity to do so.**

This work will:

- cover issues including access to finance for disabled entrepreneurs, the availability of existing business support and an assessment of the additional challenges people with disabilities face when starting a business
- include extensive engagement with disabled entrepreneurs and disability stakeholders

## **Supporting disabled civil servants to thrive at work**

The Civil Service has made good progress as an inclusive employer, although challenges remain.



**12.8% of civil servants in UK government departments identify as having a disability, compared with just 7.6% a decade ago and 10% in 2018.<sup>52</sup>**

Efforts to better support disabled civil servants have included increasing disabled representation on talent schemes and providing a bespoke development scheme for disabled employees, Disability Empowers Leadership Talent (DELTA). We will continue to grow our multi-award winning work experience and development programmes and to encourage departments and the wider public sector to offer Supported Internships. Elements include:

- the Autism Exchange programme – which grew to over 90 placements by 2020
- the Early Diversity Internships programme – 15% of interns in 2020 were disabled
- the Summer Diversity Internships programme – 28% of interns in 2020 were disabled

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52 Institute for Government Whitehall Monitor 2021

We are also excited to partner with Leonard Cheshire to offer disability internships in the Civil Service under its Change 100 scheme, in 2021 and beyond.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is also demonstrating its commitment to ensuring that disabled people are recruited, retained and progress. The NICS conducts targeted outreach in partnership with disability organisations to encourage and promote its career opportunities to disabled applicants. Additional initiatives include the Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities and the NICS People Strategy, which is focused on better supporting and enabling career progression for disabled civil servants.

The Scottish Government published its Recruitment and Retention Plan for Disabled People in 2019. Senior Civil Service (SCS) recruitment diversity has improved significantly. Action includes sponsorship arrangements for all disabled SCS who have self-identified for talent purposes and a single point of contact for adjustments. 34% of attendees at the Future Leaders Diversity Conference (2020) identified as disabled. A new Workplace Adjustments Service

is being piloted, with full roll-out due in October 2021.

The Welsh Government's Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021–2026 sets out its target for 20% of the people it recruits to be disabled by 2026. It has a target to promote disabled people at a rate which exceeds their population share and has committed to embed the social model of disability. It is committed to remove methodological barriers in recruitment. Welsh Government is a Disability Confident Leader and the first government department to sign up to Changing Faces Pledge to be Seen. Progression remains a challenge. While progress has been made, with the proportion of disabled civil servants, at senior Civil Service level it remains 3% below what it is across the whole Civil Service.<sup>53</sup>

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53 Institute for Government Whitehall Monitor 2021

**“I have had mobility issues since birth but always focused on what I can do rather than what I can’t. I have done a wide variety of operational roles in (our organisation), including a posting overseas in a hostile environment. I currently lead a large project team and am a trained coach. I have only felt disabled when people have made assumptions about my abilities. I hope to take on further leadership roles which promote the things that helped me perform at my best – an openness to consider alternative ways of doing things and an emphasis on building teams which harness different skills and life experiences.”**

**– Jess**

We will go further to support disabled civil servants to thrive at work.

**All UK government departments will:**

- **encourage and support workplace disability networks, to talk about disability issues, change perceptions and encourage inclusive behaviour**
- **achieve and maintain the highest level of Disability Confident accreditation, alongside other major public bodies**
- **ensure responsive and timely support to meet workplace adjustment needs. This will include training leaders and managers and ensuring clear and accessible guidance is in place by early 2022**
- **develop and embed flexible working so that it:**
  - **helps disabled people to thrive and progress in their careers**
  - **works for all civil servants**
  - **meets the needs of the Civil Service**

**By September 2021, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will publish a plan to bring more disabled people into the civilian workforce – to meet its target of 15.3% by 2030.**

Civilians are civil servants working alongside military personnel, both in the UK or overseas on postings or operational deployments.

## **More opportunities for disabled people to serve in Defence and the security agencies**

We want disabled people to have the opportunity to serve in the armed forces and the agencies, as well as in the Civil Service.

We welcome everyone with the skills and aptitude we are seeking.

That extends to the intelligence community. All 3 security agencies – MI5, MI6 and GCHQ – will ensure that our workforce will be fully representative of wider society we serve by 2030.



**MI6 will strive to ensure that by 2025, 9% of the organisation is drawn from those identifying as disabled – both overall and at each grade.**

MOD will lead by example, creating more opportunities for disabled people to serve as:

- reservists – **MOD will explore how to increase opportunities for disabled people to serve as part of the armed forces reserves<sup>54</sup> by the end of 2023, including:**
  - **promoting better use of disabled reservists for appropriate roles across the armed forces**
  - **guaranteeing interviews for disabled reservists who meet the minimum requirements when recruiting for those roles**



<sup>54</sup> Those in the 'Group D' employment category.

- armed forces – **by 2025, MOD will deliver the Armed Forces Recruitment Programme to recruit more diverse military personnel, including disabled people**

We will experiment with the recruitment of more diverse military personnel into the new National Cyber Force, using it as a pathfinder for this increased inclusivity.



## Education: ensuring children and young people fulfil their potential

The school day can be challenging for some disabled children. In the UK, 8% of children are disabled as defined under the Equality Act 2010.<sup>55</sup>

**“When I was in the Juniors at Primary School we had a cloakroom where we hung our coats. Due to being short I was unable to reach the pegs so a peg was put lower down for me on the wall. Whilst I was very grateful for this it meant that my peg stayed in the same place for all the years I was in the Juniors. Every year we would move up a line in the cloakroom, I never did. This meant that I missed out on all the talk that went on in the cloakroom with my classmates. I was always in the line for year 3 even when I was in year 4, 5 and 6.”**  
– Donna

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-201819>

Despite progress, there remains a big disparity in qualifications achieved.<sup>56</sup> 23% of disabled people had a degree or equivalent in 2020, compared with 39.7% of non-disabled people.



**38% of disabled people who responded to the UK Disability Survey said that concerns about other people's views have stopped them from pursuing education.<sup>57</sup>**

**“One of the biggest things that the Open University has given me is belief in myself and in my own actions and ability. When they said I wouldn't, I didn't. When I believed I could, I did. I believe I have the ability to obtain a distinction, if not at least a first. I'm going to prove to the world that people with ADHD are not 'thick' or 'stupid'. They are neurodiverse. I want to be a testament to all the people with learning disabilities who have been told “you will never amount to anything” and prove to them and society otherwise.”**

**– Amy**

<sup>56</sup> Disability and Education: UK 2020

<sup>57</sup> UK Disability Survey 2021

More than half disabled children and young people also meet the definition of having ‘special educational needs’ (SEN). Early years settings, schools and colleges provide additional support to those with SEN to help them reach their full potential and prepare effectively for adulthood. We are committed to improving experiences for children and young people with SEN and disabilities in these settings, as well as better supporting disabled students at university.

We will go further in the following ways:

- improve support for children and young people in England with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the financial year 2021 to 2022, including:
  - completing a wide-ranging review to improve outcomes
  - an extra £730 million high needs revenue funding for children and young people with more complex needs
  - an extra £300 million to improve existing school provision and accessibility
- boost professional development for those supporting children and young people with SEND

- support improvements to the supported internships programme
- increase the number of disabled people entering into apprenticeships and ensure that those who start an apprenticeship go on to thrive

## **Delivering the SEND Review**

DfE made radical changes to the SEND system in England in 2014. These changes extended support to everyone aged 25 and under and aimed to improve outcomes by putting the child or young person at the centre of the system.

Despite heavy investment, and good practice prompted by these reforms, disabled children and young people are not continuously experiencing improved outcomes.

DfE launched a major review of the SEND system to examine how further improvements can be made.

**DfE will consult on improvements to the SEND system through the SEND Review.**

The SEND Review will focus on improving support and preparing disabled children and young people for fulfilled adulthood. We want to:

- identify needs early and address them as soon as possible
- clarify the roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in the SEND system, across education, health and care, and with a clear offer in mainstream education
- provide faster, more streamlined access to Education, Health and Care Plans for those who need them

In combination, these measures should improve families' experience of getting support and improve outcomes, as well as making the system more sustainable and resilient.

**“My school has always strived to include me in lessons: sending lesson plans ahead of the lesson so they can be made more accessible; setting me a question at the start of the lesson to give me plenty of time to write my answer and adapting tests so my level of understanding could be assessed without too much repetition. Using a spelling board to say everything I want can be exhausting, but with these changes I feel I can contribute as a valued member of the class.”**

**– Jonathan, aged 14**

The Welsh Government is introducing a new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system. Key to the ALN transformation programme is the ALN and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. Learner focused, it makes the system more equitable, simpler and less adversarial and introduces new statutory Individual Development Plans (IDPs). Phased implementation begins in September 2021, with a £20 million package of funding.

The Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities published a joint action plan (2020) in response to an additional



support and learning (ASL) independent review. The plan sets out a series of actions addressing review recommendations and enhancing the experiences of children and young people with additional support needs, including disabled children and young people. Progress will be reported in October 2021.

## **Funding for educating those with complex special educational needs and disabilities**

High Needs funding is incredibly important: it supports those with complex SEND up to the age of 25. It also supports children and young people who receive their education while they are in hospital.

DfE is providing an additional £730 million of ongoing revenue funding for children and young people with complex SEND during the financial year 2021 to 2022. This means that the total high needs funding allocation will have risen by 24% in 2 years to over £8 billion this year.

## **Investing in school accessibility and capacity**

We have invested £365 million over the period 2018 to 2021 to create new school places and improve existing provision for children with SEND. 59 new special free schools for children with complex SEND have been opened and a further 75 are in the pipeline.

**DfE is investing a further £300 million to create places, improve existing provision in schools and make accessibility adaptations for children and young people with SEND in the financial year 2021 to 2022.**

## **Training for all schools and colleges in supporting children and young people with SEND**

We want more children and young people with SEND to have their needs met without requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan.

**DfE is providing funding of up to £3.82 million in the 2021 to 2022 financial year to offer staff in schools and colleges continuing professional development, specifically in supporting children and young people with SEND.**

## **Training more educational psychologists**

Educational psychologists play a key role in helping pupils with SEND, advising and supporting schools and colleges, and providing critical input into Education, Health and Care plans.

**DfE is contributing £9.3 million in the 2021 to 2022 financial year to fund the training of more educational psychologists, increasing the number of trainee educational psychologists each year to over 200.**

Additional trainees from this programme will start to join the workforce in autumn 2021, as they spend the second and third years of their training working with children and young people.

## **Involving families of children with SEND in service design**

DfE is committed to involving parents and young people in designing SEND policies and services. This helps create a system centred on families' needs, increasing confidence in the services families use.

**DfE is providing funding of £8.6 million in financial year 2021 to 2022 to strengthen the participation of parents and young people in the SEND system, through ensuring that they have a voice in designing policies and services, and have access to high quality information, advice and support.**

This includes providing up to £17,500 for each Parent Carer Forum in England, representing an

increase of £2,500 compared with the 2021 to 2022 financial year.

## **Smoothing transitions to adulthood**

We want disabled young people to be supported and have positive experiences as they transition to adulthood. This remains a challenging time for many.

A disabled person with a degree is still no more likely to be in work than a non-disabled person whose highest qualification is at GCSE.<sup>58</sup>

Preparing all children and young people with SEND for adulthood is a key part of the SEND system. Those supporting young people with disabilities are expected to be ambitious about the outcomes they can achieve and to focus on ensuring that they are able to live like their peers by supporting them: to enter higher education or employment; to be able to live independently; to be part of broader society; and to be as healthy as possible.

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58 The employment of disabled people 2019

Young people with SEND can access the following support:

- over 1,500 Jobcentre advisers in schools will advise on skills, training and vocational routes into work
- a school or college Careers Leader who can help with career plans and engage employers to provide experiences of the workplace
- the National Careers Service in England, which provides free, impartial information, advice and guidance on jobs and careers
- the National Citizen Service programme's inclusion fund, which gives extra support for specialist staff, equipment and travel
- the Disabled Students' Allowance helps disabled students with the additional costs they may face in higher education because of their disability. This includes costs relating to assistive and accessible technology and software, travel, and the provision of more specialist non-medical help, such as BSL interpretation and specialist study skills support

- the Disabled Students' Commission, which has a focus on enhancing the employability of disabled students

Progress continues towards eliminating the gap in degree outcomes (achievement of 1sts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students by 2024 to 2025. This is a formal Key Performance Measure for the Office for Students, the regulator of higher education in England.

Our commitment to improving transition experiences for disabled young people is ongoing, and strengthened for financial year 2021 to 2022 in the following ways.

## **Supporting pathways to employment**

Improving disabled young people's pathways to employment is an integral part of our plans to build back better, and build back fairer, from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will continue work to ensure that disabled young people can follow high quality study programmes, with clear pathways to higher education and employment. We have already

outlined our plans to make available a passport for all disabled students (including those receiving Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)), when they leave university.

Supported internships are a work-based study programme, where young people spend the majority of their time based at an employer. They help young people aged 16 to 24 with an Education, Health and Care plan to get the skills they need for work so they can get into a job.

**DfE will improve supported internships in England, including updating guidance, developing a self-assessment quality framework, and helping local authorities to develop local supported employment forums by March 2022.**

Traineeships are a learning programme with work experience that provide a supported transition into an apprenticeship, another job or further learning. The government has invested in the biggest ever expansion of traineeships – £111 million in the Plan for Jobs for the 2020 to 2021 academic year and £126 million in the March budget for 2021 to 2022.



Traineeships have a history of supporting young people with a disability. They are aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 (or 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan) who need extra support to develop the knowledge, skills and experience employers are looking for. In 2019 to 2020, 23% of people starting a traineeship declared a learning difficulty or disability.<sup>59</sup>

**DfE will evaluate the impact of this £237 million investment in traineeships on young people with SEND by July 2022.**

We will also consider what more we can do to support disabled apprentices. We have made significant progress in increasing the proportion of disabled apprentices following the Maynard Review in 2016 and Mencap's Access All Areas report in 2019.



**12.5% of apprenticeships started in 2020 were started by disabled people.**

<sup>59</sup> Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic Year 2019–20 – Explore education statistics

DfE will go further. Not only do we want to increase the number of disabled people entering into apprenticeships, we want to ensure that those who start an apprenticeship go on to thrive. Our ambition is for more disabled people to undertake and achieve an apprenticeship.

**DfE will work with the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network of employers, the Disabled Apprentices Network and the disability sector to understand the current barriers people may face in undertaking an apprenticeship, what works and to co-develop solutions. This will include benefits from flexibilities and support available for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Findings will be published during National Apprenticeship Week (NAW) in February 2022.**

**To increase awareness of apprenticeships and accessibility for disabled people, DfE will work with DWP on the Disability Confident employer review to take into account the benefits it can provide to apprentices; and on processes for referring people – especially those with disabilities – into apprenticeships.**

**DfE will work with DWP, disabled apprentices, employers, providers and disabled people's organisations and charities as the Access to Work Passport is piloted during 2021, so that apprentices benefit from improvements that are made. Alongside this, DfE will consider links to the accessibility of other lines of funded support for disabled apprentices.**

**DfE will also further strengthen the quality of apprenticeships, focusing in particular on narrowing the achievement gap between those who declare and those who do not declare a disability: including through a workforce development programme for apprenticeship providers and support to employers.**

The department will also consult on what else we can do to strengthen pathways to employment in England.



## **Shopping: creating more consumer choice and convenience**

Too often, disabled people experience limited choice when shopping for goods and services, whether browsing the local high street or searching online for a better deal on utilities.

**“I always ask if restaurants are accessible but all the time I’m given the wrong advice. It feels like it’s obvious to me what it means to be wheelchair accessible, but obviously some people don’t even know what it means.”**

**– Diane**

Many businesses on UK high streets are inaccessible for disabled consumers. The buildings disabled respondents to the UK Disability Survey had most frequently been unable to access or had extreme difficulty

accessing were shops and shopping centres (78%) and pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes (66%).

Shopping online can be a similarly frustrating experience. 98% of the million most visited web pages did not meet accessibility standards<sup>60</sup> and 69% of disabled internet users click away from sites with barriers.<sup>61</sup>

Access to essentials was an issue for many disabled people during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Disabled people more often indicated coronavirus had affected access to groceries, medication and essentials than non-disabled people (27% compared with 12%).<sup>62</sup>**

60 WebAIM. 2020. The Webaim Million: An Analysis of the Top 1,000,000 Home Pages

61 Click-Away Pound Survey (2019)

62 ONS publication 'Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: February 2021'.

**“Because we couldn’t work out doing an online food shop, we just couldn’t get the technology. Our devices that we had at the time were just not conducive for trying to do a food shop on it. And then once you got on, there were no spaces, no delivery slots. So, we quickly gave up with that.”**  
– Jessica

It is difficult to say whether progress has been made in recent years. International design standards for accessibility have improved the design of some products (for example, mobile phones), but disabled consumers have not been surveyed often enough about their retail experiences<sup>63</sup> to evaluate the impact of this on disabled people’s day to day retail experiences.

To champion disabled consumers and help make the UK the most accessible place in the world to live and work with technology, we will:

- make high streets more accessible
- accelerate the delivery of Changing Places toilets in England

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63 Eskyté, I. (2019). Disability and Shopping: Customers, Markets and the State. Routledge.

- explore a new assistive technology challenge
- explore how to improve the accessibility of private sector websites
- appoint more business leaders to promote accessibility in their sectors

We want to do more in the longer term. The Disability Unit recognises the huge potential of action in this area and will prioritise further cross-government work in 2021 to 2022.

As a first step, we will improve our understanding of disabled people's experiences accessing products and services in the UK. This will include commissioning research and exploring the extra costs some disabled people may face.

**BEIS and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.**

Unlocking increased mobility and independence for many disabled people, Motability has shown just one way that costs for disabled people can be reduced, through strong industry partnerships and economies of scale.

## **Transforming the accessibility of our towns and high streets**

We want our high streets and town centres to be welcoming and accessible for everyone. Yet for many disabled people, they can be an obstacle course.

**“I mean, in terms of physical services, shopping for clothes, personally, I find it an absolute nightmare. If I’m using my scooter or wheelchair to mobilise around or even on crutches, I find that the actual physical space between aisles and between, you know, garment rails are either too high, around the shop, there’s not enough accessibility to get round at all.”**

**– UK Disability Survey respondent**



Responding to the UK Disability Survey, nearly a third (31%) of disabled people found using public spaces difficult ‘all the time’ or ‘often’.

It is not only a social injustice but a potentially huge loss to high street businesses. One estimate puts the spending power of disabled people and their families at £274 billion.<sup>64</sup>

DfT issues guidance for local authorities and other organisations in England, which is also referred to in devolved administrations, on accessible pedestrian and transport infrastructure. We will strengthen our guidance in 2021.

**DfT will update Inclusive Mobility guidance and Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces guidance in 2021, and guidance on designing streets for people (Manual for Streets) in 2022.**

As well as strengthening our guidance for existing street scapes, we will consider how we can encourage new projects that increase high street accessibility.

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64 <https://wearepurple.org.uk/the-purple-pound-infographic/>

**MHCLG will consider how we can support projects that increase high street accessibility for disabled people, in the design of any future local growth funding.**

The Welsh Government has committed to taking forward recommendations to introduce Access Certificates for public buildings – including shops, food outlets, sports clubs, pubs and offices as well as public transport services following the ‘Scores on the Doors’ petition.

Where people shop or go out should not be determined by their disability.

**“I travelled for 5 hours trying to find an accessible toilet that was a) open, and b) accessible (not across a gravel car park or up steps). Often accessible toilets are used as cleaning goods storage cupboards. I believe this practice should be stopped as my husband often has to clear things so I can gain access, which is embarrassing and degrading.”**

**– UK Disability Survey respondent**

Changing Places toilets offer larger, supported facilities for disabled people who cannot use standard accessible toilets.

A major change to building rules in England means that it is now compulsory to include a Changing Places toilet in certain new public buildings, including shopping centres, supermarkets, cinemas, stadia and arts venues with a capacity of 350 people or more. We expect to add these crucial facilities to more than 150 new buildings a year, meaning thousands of disabled people will have greater access to public places.

**MHCLG will make £30 million available from summer 2021 to accelerate delivery of Changing Places toilets in existing buildings in England.**

We will also further improve provision across the transport network, as well as at motorway service stations.

**DfT will extend its Changing Places programme by making a further £450,000 available for Changing Places toilets to support disabled people using the wider transport network, on top of the £2.2 million already invested at motorway service stations in England.**

The expanded programme will be delivered in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium.

In a similar bid to accelerate the delivery of Changing Places toilets, devolved administrations have taken this work forward in ways that best meet the needs of their populations.

The Scottish Government has consulted and published an amended Non-domestic Technical Handbook which states where Changing Places toilets should be provided as part of new buildings or new building work.

The Welsh Government is considering the outcomes of a public consultation on increasing provision of Changing Places toilets and baby nappy changing facilities in certain types of buildings that ran in early 2021.

The Northern Ireland Executive is planning to make it a requirement to put Changing Places facilities in new buildings of a certain type or size, or where relevant works are being undertaken to buildings. A consultation will launch shortly.

## **Driving innovation in assistive technology**

Technology offers a range of potential solutions to many of the everyday challenges that disabled people face.

This can be most convenient and accessible when integrated in products designed for all, such as smartphones. Other assistive products are more specialised, such as wheelchairs, hearing aids or screen readers.

The impact of products that support everyday tasks is huge. Over three quarters (78%) of disabled people find access to mobile technologies helpful for living independently.<sup>65</sup>

We have yet to take full advantage of the potential of technology to increase disabled people's independence. Too often:

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65 Independent. Confident. Connected: Scope – Smith, Ceri, and Simon Dixon. 2018.

- technology is developed without taking account of the needs of disabled consumers. From streaming services<sup>66</sup> and smartphone apps<sup>67</sup> to AI-powered recruitment and interview tools,<sup>68</sup> the importance of involving disabled consumers in the design process is often emphasised<sup>69</sup>
- disabled people lack access to technologies that would benefit them. This happens in many settings, including education,<sup>70</sup> employment<sup>71</sup> and in daily living<sup>72</sup>
- disabled people may not have the awareness, training or support to make best use of technology<sup>73 74</sup>

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66 The Big Hack: Scope, 2020 – <https://www.scope.org.uk/big-hack/>

67 Research Institute for Disabled Consumers, Survey of pan-disability panel, 2020

68 Review into Bias in Algorithmic Decision Making: Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, November 2020

69 A review: accessible technology through participatory design: Christian Quintero, July 2020

70 Arriving at Thriving – Learning from disabled students to ensure access for all: Policy Connect and Higher Education Commission, October 2020

71 Reimagining the Workplace: Leonard Cheshire, February 2019

72 Jane Seale (2020) Keeping connected and staying well: the role of technology in supporting people with learning disabilities during the coronavirus pandemic, Milton Keynes, The Open University.

73 Current Understanding, Support Systems, and Technology-led Interventions for Specific Learning Difficulties: July 2020, commissioned by Council for Science and Technology

74 Rapid literature review on assistive technology in education: July 2020 Dave L. Edyburn, Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

We are providing significant support for innovation in the development of assistive and accessible technologies, and also to improve access to their use. In 2019 to 2020, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) invested £58.4 million in research and development related to assistive technology.



**So far, the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund has invested £1.4 million in assistive technology projects.**

We will go further to increase innovation and develop new products that will improve disabled people's everyday lives.

**BEIS will challenge UKRI and other research stakeholders to use future innovation challenges to accelerate innovation in assistive technologies.**

We will also explore how we can drive innovation in assistive technology through the new Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology, outlined in Part 2.

## **Improving the accessibility of private sector websites**

Accessible websites enable disabled users, and users of assistive technologies (such as screen readers, speech recognition and screen magnification), to access the same information and services that others can. Given the growth of online services, information, and social networks, ensuring websites are accessible is a key part of ensuring disabled people can participate fully in society.



**A 2016 survey found that 71% of disabled customers clicked away from online sites they found difficult to use at an estimated cost to UK business of £11.75 billion.**



There has been progress improving accessibility with the Public Sector Bodies Website Accessibility Regulations coming into force in 2018<sup>75</sup>, albeit with some way still to go. The Cabinet Office Central Digital and Data Office audits compliance, while the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Great Britain and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland work on enforcement. But there is more we can do to ensure UK private sector websites are more accessible.

**The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will build the evidence base about the nature and scale of the inaccessibility of private sector websites, and explore how the government can effectively intervene including possible legislative options, reporting back by spring 2022.**

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>

## **Appointing more business leaders to promote accessibility in their sectors**

We recognise the importance of working with the private sector to improve the experience disabled people have as consumers. Change is more likely to be sustainable if it is led from within industry by leaders who understand it well.

**The Disability Unit is launching an enhanced and expanded programme of Disability and Access Ambassadors in summer 2021.**

Appointed by the Minister for Disabled People, Disability and Access Ambassadors use their influence in business to encourage and support changes in access for both disabled consumers and employees. Appointments are voluntary and run for 1 to 3 years.

**“Having lived experience of disability, and of the barriers that disabled consumers can face when seeking to access products and services, I’ve welcomed the opportunities that my role as Disability and Access Ambassador for the Insurance Industry has given me. I have worked with disabled people’s organisations and consumer groups, professional and trade bodies, charities, government departments and politicians to raise awareness and deliver change. I’m proud to have led the establishment of the ground-breaking Access to Insurance programme, which will change the way the industry works in the UK, especially in relation to signposting, underwriting transparency, inclusive design, Equality Act awareness and the importance of consulting people with lived experience.”**

**– Johnny Timpson**

The Ambassador role includes:

- making the business case for goods and services being accessible to disabled customers
- using their networks to share good practice and to highlight potential improvements
- encouraging equal employment opportunities for disabled people
- helping businesses to improve their communication with disabled customers
- raising awareness of disability and accessibility issues
- working with other Ambassadors to support systemic change across the private sector

Changes initiated by Ambassadors (previously known as Sector Champions) have included: the Access to Insurance programme; increased use of the sunflower lanyard across the airports, rail and retail sectors; ensuring that disabled people are involved in rebuilding the countryside and heritage sectors post COVID-19; and improving rail accessibility, managing the issues around the wearing of masks on public transport during

the pandemic. The new Arts Access Card also stemmed from an Ambassador proposal.

We are increasing the number of Ambassadors. This includes recruiting new Ambassadors in the following sectors: airports, arts and culture, banking, buses, creative industries, energy, hospitality, housing, insurance, rail, retail and universities. Posts in other sectors are being considered.



## **Leisure: widening access to arts, culture, sport and the great outdoors**

Spending time with family and friends and doing the things we enjoy is a vital part of everyday life. Too many disabled people are missing out.

**“People tell me that it makes them uncomfortable when I’m not feeling well, so it’s hard for them to be around me. I found that very strange. I couldn’t be who I was before, and they fell back.”**

**– Latanya**

13.9% of disabled people regularly feel lonely, compared with 3.8% of non-disabled people.<sup>76</sup> This has not narrowed since 2013 to 2014. Disabled children are over 3 times more likely

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<sup>76</sup> Outcomes for disabled people, UK: 2020

to often or always feel lonely compared with non-disabled children.<sup>77</sup>

Practical accessibility issues, stigma and the need to carefully manage energy levels and pain<sup>78</sup> are all barriers to socialising and participation. Of those disabled people who experienced difficulty accessing public buildings at least ‘sometimes’, 90% of those who had accessed culture, sport and leisure services had experienced at least some difficulties.<sup>79</sup>

Socialising and participation in sports, art, culture and nature boosts health and wellbeing.<sup>80</sup> We want to level up disparities in participation between disabled and non-disabled people so everyone can benefit.

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77 **Active Lives Survey 2019 to 2020 data tables**

78 Disability Unit and Policy Lab Lived Experience Research 2020

79 UK Disability Survey 2021

80 White M.P., Pahl S., Wheeler B.W., Depledge M.H., Fleming L.E. (2017). Natural environments and subjective wellbeing: Different types of exposure are associated with different aspects of wellbeing. *Health Place* 45: 77–84; **A Review of Nature-Based Interventions for Mental Health Care 2016; What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing? A scoping review 2019 (WHO)**; Rosenbaum S., Tiedemann A., Sherrington C., Curtis J., Ward P.B. (2014). Physical activity interventions for people with mental illness: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Clin Psychiatry* 75(9):964-74.

**“I have disabilities as a result of Meningitis. Whilst a student at The Orpheus Centre in Godstone I developed a passion for songwriting and performance. I have sung at Winchester Cathedral, Bagshot Park, Buckingham Palace and The Royal Albert Hall. Working with places like Orpheus, and later Freewheelers and Extant, made me realise how important the performing arts are in helping disabled people develop confidence.”**

**– Luke**

We will:

- widen participation in arts, culture and sport
- make the UK the most accessible tourism destination in Europe
- improve access to paths
- make playgrounds more inclusive

We want to do more to support disabled people to participate. The Disability Unit will prioritise further cross-government action in this area in 2021 to 2022.



## Widening participation in art, culture and sport

We will widen participation in arts and culture. Disability is one of the main barriers people give for not attending art and cultural events.<sup>81</sup>

There is wide support among disabled people for a national arts access scheme.

**Arts Councils across the UK are working together with the British Film Institute to launch a free, UK wide arts access card by March 2022.**

This access card will be usable across all arts and cultural venues, for seamless, barrier-free booking that is responsive to individual circumstances and needs.

‘A Culture Strategy for Scotland’ sets out an inclusive vision, and includes measures to ensure that disabled people can lead a cultural life – formal and informal – of their choosing. A National Partnership for Culture advises Scottish ministers on delivery of the strategy.

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81 Taking Part Survey 2017–18, p.2

Further, Creative Scotland has formed their first Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group and set up a targeted Create:Inclusion Fund.

We will also widen participation in sport. Disabled people are nearly twice as likely<sup>82</sup> to be physically inactive.

**Sport England will:**

- **invest £20 million in the financial year 2021 to 2022 through its Tackling Inequalities Fund. This fund has successfully reached and impacted under-represented groups, and includes a specific focus on disabled people**
- **find new ways to address inequalities in physical activity levels between disabled and non-disabled people, in partnership with the Design Council by March 2022**
- **develop and pilot a new training programme to better enable social workers to promote physical activity to disabled people in 2022**

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82 Sport England's Active Lives survey

Live sport offers enjoyment for many, including from the shared experience of being there and feeling part of it. Sports venues have a duty to provide an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of everyone, irrespective of disability.

We want sport to be at the forefront of equality, and expect all sports and all clubs to take the action needed to ensure this.

The success of adaptive sports for veterans is an example of how government can help reduce the stubborn differences in physical activity levels between disabled and non-disabled people.

**The Office for Veterans' Affairs will share best practice and insight from the veterans' adaptive sport community with disability organisations and providers of sport and activity by March 2022.**

Building on the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan's (2016 to 2021) success, the Northern Ireland Executive is developing a new 10-year strategy for sport and physical activity. Launching in 2021, emphasis will be on provision for disabled people. The Active Living: No Limits

Forum, a disability sectoral group overseeing delivery of the Plan, will manage the review and extension of the Action Plan through to 2026.

Since 2016, Sportscotland has invested over £3 million in Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), supporting disability sport at all levels, and supporting athletes on the world stage. In 2019 to 2020 SDS local branches delivered 466 sessions and 245 events, while over 2,000 people engaged in SDS national events across 8 sports.

For 2021 to 2022, Disability Sport Wales will receive approximately £1 million as a National Partner from Sport Wales.

# **Making the UK the most accessible tourism destination in Europe**

We are committed to making the UK the most accessible tourism destination in Europe by 2025, as set out in the Tourism Recovery Plan.<sup>83</sup>

## **DCMS will:**

- **work with VisitBritain and VisitEngland and other stakeholders in the tourism sector to promote the importance of accessible tourism in the media and to businesses**
- **partner with the Inclusive Tourism Action Group and promote the National Accessible Scheme which rates tourist accommodation based on its suitability for guests with accessibility requirements**
- **hold a series of roundtables, hosted by the Minister for Sport and Tourism, with stakeholders across the tourism industry to better understand the barriers disabled people face as**

83 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tourism-recovery-plan>

## tourists

### Improving access to nature

People with a long-term illness or health conditions are around 25% less likely to have enjoyed nature in the past 14 days than others.<sup>84</sup>

In our 25 Year Environment Plan, we committed to making sure that there are accessible natural spaces close to where people live and work, and to encourage more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.

#### **The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will:**

- **make the England Coast Path as easy to use as possible for disabled people. All stretches of the England Coast Path will be open or with establishment works underway by the end of 2021, unless there are ongoing planning or legal issues**
- **create a new north coast to coast National Trail from St Bees in Cumbria**

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84 People and Nature Survey 2020

## **to Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire by 2025**

- **improve access, signage and information on existing national paths and trails**

Defra leads cross-government delivery of a £5.77 million investment in green social prescribing – supporting people to engage in nature based interventions to prevent mental ill health and reduce health inequalities. Many disabled people will benefit.

## **More inclusive playgrounds**

Play is an important part of growing up. It offers not only enjoyment but supports children's social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

**“My youngest son, who has cerebral palsy and epilepsy and is registered blind, loves to play and be swung around as much as any child. But as he’s grown older and bigger we’ve found it hard to find playgrounds that are accessible. This has left our whole family excluded. It has become increasingly more difficult to take my 3 children to our local play parks as my youngest son gets extremely upset as he wants to join in and be included. We will often avoid going to parks which is not fair on him or his brothers. All children deserve and have a right to access play parks.”**

**– Becky**

Yet for disabled children, the opportunities to join in play are far fewer. As a result, the opportunities to develop are also reduced.<sup>85</sup> Playgrounds and other play settings can fall short in providing inclusive facilities.

We are determined to increase opportunities for disabled children and their families, tackle

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85 Making the Case for play, Sense, February 2016



barriers and enable the simple enjoyment of play for every child, wherever they live.

The Equality Act 2010 makes clear the duty of local authorities and other service providers to advance equality of opportunity for disabled people. For play areas and playgrounds, best practice is set out in British and European standards.<sup>86</sup>

**MHCLG will publish a new National Model Design Code in summer 2021, setting out design considerations for local planning authorities. The department will use guidance supporting the Code to stress the importance of providing accessible and inclusive play spaces and equipment for all.**

We will also write to every local authority to ensure awareness of the need for inclusive facilities and to highlight the guidance and good practice standards that support this.

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86 BS 8300-1:2018 and BS EN 17210:2021



## **Public services: making access as smooth and easy as possible**

From visiting the GP surgery to regular visits from paid carers, services such as health, social care and welfare are an important part of everyday life for many disabled people. Too often, these services can be difficult to access and fragmented.

**“...the constant having to justify to various people, especially the benefits office, that I’m disabled, and no, it’s not going to change within the next 5 years. Why do I need to keep repeating myself? I’m stuck with it.”**

**– UK Disability Survey respondent**

Of those disabled people who had found difficulty accessing public buildings at least ‘sometimes’, about three quarters had experienced at least some difficulties accessing

health services (78%) and social services (74%).<sup>87</sup> Access to healthcare services appears to have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic – disabled people more often indicated coronavirus had affected access to healthcare for non-coronavirus related issues than non-disabled people (40% compared with 19%).<sup>88</sup>

**“My GP told me originally when I said to him about my foot and how I was in pain and everything he said: “Well, I don’t think they [podiatrist] are working at the moment.” And he just left it like that, nothing. When I spoke to the podiatrist, she said: “We’ve been working all the time. We’ve had to, because of emergencies such as yours.” So, how I think they could improve it is all talk to one another, and make sure they know the facts before saying to you: “Oh no, they’re not doing anything at the moment.”**

**– Shawn**

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87 UK Disability Survey, 2021

88 **ONS publication** ‘Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: February 2021

Accessing services online can be particularly challenging. Of the 10 most populated English county councils in September 2020, only the Essex County Council website was fully accessible.<sup>89</sup>

Many disabled people see these services as vital in supporting them to live independent everyday lives.



**44% of those who received formal care said it made them feel ‘more in control’ or ‘much more in control’ of their lives.<sup>90</sup>**

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89 Tests reveal biggest councils failing on legal web accessibility duty 2020 (Scope)

90 UK Disability Survey 2021

**“All my life I received a service from my local social services to help support me as I have learning disabilities. Although they helped me gain a lot of valuable life skills, I never really felt able to achieve my dream of marrying my fiancée. They never took me seriously, in fact one member of staff said I couldn’t get married because I had a learning disability! When I found out that my local council was allowing ‘micro-providers’ to work with people I was really interested as I knew someone that I wanted to work with who I trusted. I decided to opt out of the statutory care from social services and use my care package money (direct payments) to pay for a micro-provider to support me. They helped me to move in with my fiancée Alison, and 2 years later we got married, something I always dreamed of but never thought would happen!”**

**– Phil**

We are taking immediate action to improve online access to public services. DHSC and DWP are also taking longer-term steps to address the challenges disabled people experience when accessing support from social care and the welfare system. We will:

- set out proposals to improve disabled people's experience of accessing benefits
- continue working with disabled people and disability organisations at every stage of social care reforms to ensure their voices are heard and needs reflected
- improve the use of disability data and evidence in health and social care
- work to reduce the health inequalities autistic people and people with a learning disability face
- deliver a programme to improve the accessibility of online public services
- tackle the Accessible Technology Skills Gap

## Improving access to disability benefits

DWP's Health and Disability Green Paper '*Shaping Future Support*' aims to help people to live independently and to help more people to find, stay and progress in work, wherever people are able to do so. The proposals aim to ensure the health and disability benefits system meets the expectations of the people who use them, so people have a better experience and feel confident to engage with the full range of support.

8 in 10 disabled people who had accessed benefits and pension services had experienced at least some difficulties.<sup>91</sup>

**“Most of our lives are sat waiting.”**

**– Jessica**

DWP will improve signposting to other support, including health services, simplify forms and improve advocacy, so that disabled people can

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91 UK Disability Survey 2021

find their way through the benefit system and access wider support.

**Since the start of this year (2021), DWP has been testing advocacy support to assess its effectiveness and establish the best delivery model.**

DWP will continue to explore ways to improve health assessments and achieve better outcomes. This will include telephone and video assessments introduced during the pandemic and providing better support for people with serious health conditions, including people nearing the end of their lives.

**“I’m always getting letters through saying I need to reapply for my PIP. It does my head in. It’s infuriating how you get a certain amount of money each month and then it changes and then it stops and then it changes.”**

**– Efsthathia**



**DWP is also exploring options to reduce the frequency of repeat Work Capability Assessments (WCA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments, to avoid assessments where a change of award is unlikely.**

## **Health and adult social care reform**

Disabled people across the UK have told us that health and social care services are a vital part of living an independent life.

**“They have the power to decide what is a ‘necessity’ and what is a ‘luxury’ when it comes to my support. I don’t have enough hours with my carer to be able to go outside or to see my friends. Going outside and social interaction is viewed as a basic human need for non-disabled people, but not for me.”**

**– Efstathia**

**We know that a bold response is required. We are committed to sustainable reform of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals this year (2021). We want to:**

- build a system of care and support in which unpaid carers are supported and disabled people have choice and control over their lives, over what they do and how they choose to live
- support the join up of health and care services around people including through the use of technology
- ensure that everyone receives the care they need and are treated with dignity and respect

**DHSC will work with disabled people and disability organisations at every stage of social care reform to ensure their voices are heard and needs reflected.**

We are also modernising the Mental Health Act. We want to give people more control over their treatment and make sure they are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Alongside these longer-term reform efforts, DHSC will:

- strengthen the data and evidence base to support policies that will transform outcomes for disabled people, including improving our understanding of the needs of disabled people and those with multiple long-term conditions and disability
- ensure that health and social care staff understand learning disability and autism to reduce the health inequalities people with these conditions often face

## **Improving disability data and evidence**

The health system does not collect fully comprehensive data on disability.

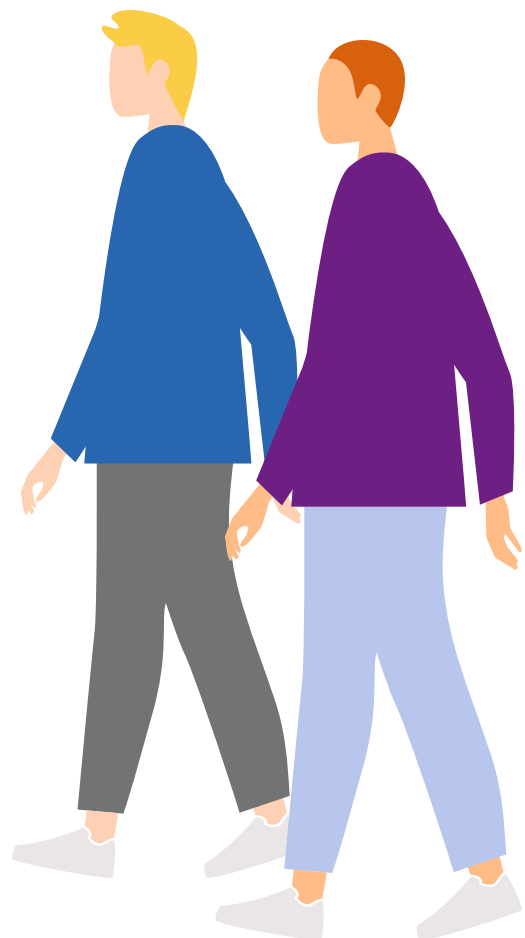
This means we do not currently have an accurate picture of the health and social care support needs of disabled people in the UK. We will work across the UK to improve disability data.

We will take action to improve the availability, quality and use of disability data in health and social care.

**DHSC will establish a new disability data working group in 2021 to look at health and social care datasets and address priority areas where there are gaps in the data.**

DHSC and NHSX published a draft data strategy for health and social care in 2021 to drive improvements in data on working age adults in receipt of care.

Alongside this, we will fund additional research to improve the quality of life of people with multiple long-term conditions, some of whom will be disabled.



## Supporting autistic people and people with a learning disability

Autistic people and people with a learning disability across the UK experience health inequalities.

The life expectancy for people with a learning disability is 27 years below average for women and 23 years below average for men.<sup>92</sup> Autistic people die 16 years earlier than non-autistic people, on average.<sup>93</sup>

NHS England and NHS Improvement confirmed in March 2021 that autistic people without a learning disability will be included for the first time in their programme to learn from the lives and deaths of people with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR).

**NHS England and NHS Improvement will expand the LeDeR programme to include autistic people, by March 2022.**

92 Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme, Annual Report 2020

93 Hirvikoski T., Mittendorfer-Rutz E., Boman M., Larsson H., Lichtenstein P., Bolte S. (2016) Premature mortality in autism spectrum disorder. The British Journal of Psychiatry. 208: 232-238

This will help improve care, reduce health inequalities and prevent premature mortality by reviewing information about the health and social care support people who have died received.

Not all health and social care staff receive learning disability and autism training.

The second annual LeDeR report, published in December 2017, recommended that mandatory learning disability awareness training should be provided to all staff, and be delivered in conjunction with people with learning disabilities and their families.

**Subject to evaluation, DHSC will make training on autism and learning disability available for all 2.7 million health and adult social care staff.**

This training would improve the experiences of health and social care for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

This commitment forms part of the refreshed Autism Strategy. The Autism Strategy has been extended from its focus on adults to include children and young people for the first time.

This strategy will sit alongside work undertaken in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where health and social care is largely devolved.

The Northern Ireland Executive is developing a fully co-produced Autism Strategy for implementation in 2021, with an emphasis on enabling independence and informed choice, equal access to services and a life filled with opportunities to be an active citizen.

The Scottish Government continues to champion human rights through the Scottish Strategy for Autism and the Keys to Life policies. In recognition of additional challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, a 'Learning/ intellectual disability and autism framework for transition and transformation' has been published to shape public services and attitudes.

Following the success of the Welsh Government's cross-government Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme, work continues to improve how public services in Wales identify and respond to the needs of people with learning disabilities. The key aim is to support individuals to lead healthy and fulfilling lives as independently as possible.

## **Improving the accessibility of online public services**

The 2012 Digital by Default strategy has removed many of the barriers experienced by disabled people when accessing government services.

However, the shift to digital has presented its own challenges. The accessibility of new services is variable.

Making a website or mobile app accessible requires making the content and design clear and simple enough that most people can use it without needing to adapt it. It also means supporting people who do need to adapt it, including people who use assistive technologies, such as screen readers.

The Central Digital and Data Office promotes accessibility across government.



**This year the Central Digital and Data Office will continue to run a programme to make online public services accessible.**

**The campaign will:**

- **help the public sector make mobile applications accessible**
- **raise awareness of how people can raise complaints about inaccessible sites**

A longer-term challenge is the development of capability to create services that are accessible to everyone. There is a high level of demand for people with these skills from both the public and private sectors, creating a shortage. This has been dubbed the Accessible Technology Skills Gap.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> <https://peatworks.org/policy-workforce-development/the-accessible-technology-skills-gap/>

**As part of a cross-government effort with the Central Digital and Data Office and the Crown Commercial Service, the Home Office will tackle this issue by:**

- **defining a cross-government accessibility profession – this will formalise the role of accessibility specialists and encourage more public sector organisations to properly resource to deliver accessible services**
- **building a pipeline of talent for the accessibility profession by using existing successful and emerging career development programmes to tackle the skills shortage – working across government to share learning**
- **improving how we buy digital products and services in government and across the public sector as a whole, for example, through more formal controls, support and training for commercial teams**

We will also explore how we can drive improvements in public services through a **Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology**.

**The Disability Unit will consider new ways to make assistive and accessible technology part of the everyday design of public services.**

# **Part 2:**

## **Disabled people's everyday experience at the heart of government policy making and service delivery**



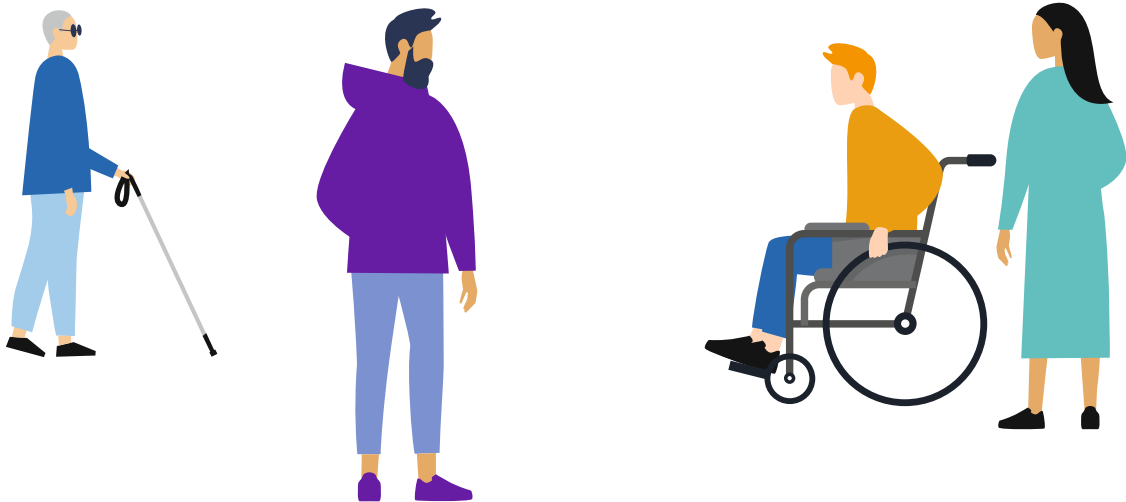
# Disabled people at the heart of government policy making and service delivery

This strategy recognises that how the UK government works is as important as what it does. Changing this will require sustained effort.

The commitments in this chapter will be led by the Cabinet Office and the Disability Unit and are intended to drive change in all departments. The delivery of the commitments will be underpinned by 5 areas that will guide our approach to disability:

- 1. Ensure fairness and equality** – we will empower disabled people by promoting fairness and equality in opportunities, outcomes and experiences, including work.
- 2. Consider disability from the start** – we will embed inclusive and accessible approaches and services to avoid creating disabling experiences from the outset.

- 3. Support independent living** – we will actively encourage initiatives that support all disabled people to have choice and control in life.
- 4. Increase participation** – we will enable greater inclusion of a diverse disabled population in the development and delivery of services, products and policies.
- 5. Deliver joined up responses** – we will work across organisational boundaries and improve data and evidence to better understand and respond to complex issues that affect disabled people.



## Transforming evidence and data

We will build a more complete, authoritative and transparent evidence base about the needs of disabled people, including everyday experience as a key element.

We will draw directly on insights from disabled people, foregrounding disabled people's everyday experiences as we do this. We will also work with disabled people's organisations, disability charities and academics, among others.

**The Disability Unit will lead a multi-year programme to improve the availability, quality, relevance and comparability of government disability data, co-ordinated through:**

- **a cross-government group responsible for overseeing and implementing data improvement plans**
- **a panel of experts on the lived experience of disabled people to assess findings from research and to provide advice on data improvement projects**

**By January 2022, the Disability Unit will begin regular disability surveys and monitor public perceptions of disabled people and policies through the Office of National Statistics.**

**By summer 2022, the Disability Unit will publish the first in a series of cross-government harmonised disability data. We will encourage wider use of the harmonised standards for disability<sup>95</sup> and impairment<sup>96</sup> set out by the Government Statistical Service (GSS).**

**This will allow us to better compare data collected by different government departments.**

This work will be complemented by commitments from other government departments and agencies to develop their evidence base and harmonise their data.

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95 GSS Disability harmonised standard

96 GSS Impairment harmonised standard



## Reforming government procurement to drive better outcomes for disabled people

Central government spends around £49 billion per year on goods and services.

We are committed to leveraging this huge government procurement spend to drive improved outcomes for disabled people.



**The new Social Value Model of public procurement came into force in January 2021.**

Commercial teams across government use the model to assess and evaluate the social value offered in tenders, and to manage and measure the social value delivered in contracts.

Priority outcomes include reducing the disability employment gap, promoting equality of opportunity and supporting physical and mental health in the contract workforce.

**This year (2021), the Cabinet Office will create a Disability Commissioning Taskforce of disabled people's user-led organisations to improve disability organisations' access to government contracts.**

The taskforce will be chaired by the Champion of the Social Value Act, Claire Dove CBE.

We will go further and appoint the first Disability Crown Representative.

Crown Representatives help the government to act as a single customer. They work across departments to ensure that a coherent, strategic view of the government's needs is communicated to potential suppliers.

Appointing a Disability Crown Representative will help to ensure that the case for inclusion is more strongly and consistently conveyed to businesses, so that they invest in – and realise the commercial benefits of – inclusive business.

**Cabinet Office will appoint a Disability Crown representative to help unlock the innovation and economic benefits of disability inclusion through the government's commercial activities by March 2022.**

## **Enhancing our engagement with disabled people**

We want to build on the best models of engagement and to ensure we are engaging with a diverse group of disabled people.

To improve the way we engage:

**By December 2021, the Disability Unit will review the way the UK government engages with disabled people, in discussions with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities.**

We will be mindful in our review of our responsibilities under the UNCRPD.

## **Ensuring that our communications are accessible**

We will continue to build on the principles outlined by the Government Communication Service to ensure that all government information is as accessible and inclusive as possible.

This includes ensuring that our language is inclusive and that we are mindful of how we portray disability. We will use a range of communication channels to reach disabled people and a range of accessible formats where appropriate including British Sign Language, Braille and EasyRead.

We will continue consultation with disabled people and disabled people led organisations when we consider how best to do this.

We will build on the work we have done as part of the COVID-19 communications hub. The Cabinet Office communications team worked closely with disability stakeholders to create a Disability Communications Working Group, to ensure that the government's COVID-19 messages and

information reached disabled people and those with accessibility needs.

The Cabinet Office continues to work with other departments and local authorities to make sure that core COVID-19 announcements are available in accessible formats and that these formats are available as soon as possible after announcements. This includes BSL video and audio, EasyRead and large text formats. Lessons learnt from COVID-19 communications will inform future communication strategies and campaigns.

**The Cabinet Office will:**

- **ensure a nominated senior civil servant continues to champion accessible communications across government**
- **seek regular feedback from different groups of stakeholders to ensure we are able to communicate effectively with people with different disabilities**
- **identify and seek collaborative ways to co-create communications and continue sharing accessible formats**

## **A world-leading Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology**

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the importance of assistive and accessible technology for many disabled people and reminded us that access to the right technology is key to unlocking greater inclusion.

Some progress has been made; many Jobcentres now have computers with assistive technology to be used by DWP customers. However, examples of good practice have not yet become commonplace, leading to a patchwork of services, often not designed around disabled peoples' needs and involving avoidable inefficiencies. For example, someone may use assistive technology at a Jobcentre to apply for a job but then find they are unable to use this technology at home to prepare for the interview because their social care assessment focuses on technology for daily living.

**The Disability Unit will invest up to £1 million in 2021 to 2022 to develop a new Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology, reporting on progress by summer 2022.**

We would like to make the UK the most accessible place in the world to live and work with technology.

The Disability Unit will assess the assistive and accessible technology needs of disabled people in England, to establish where these are being met and where improvements can and should be made.

The aims of the centre will be developed further over the coming months in dialogue with disabled people, business and the public sector, but could include:

- acting as a central source of evidence and expertise that supports local assistive and accessible technology services to better assess and meet peoples' needs and keep pace with technological innovations

- piloting and helping to scale new models of delivering technology in a more joined-up, cost-effective and user-friendly way including exploring a ‘lifelong’ provision model
- ensuring more effective awareness raising, training and support for disabled people to use the technology, to maximise its potential to improve lives
- encouraging the technology sector to work with disabled people when developing new products – improving design and usability for all consumers

## **Leading internationally**

The UK has long championed disabled people on the international stage.

The UK was instrumental in the development of the UNCRPD and our academics, together with academics in the US, have been at the forefront of new developments in disability theory and practice. The 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was the first piece of legislation in the world to recognise and give rights to disabled people, and we appointed the first Minister for Disabled People in the world in 1974.



More recently, in 2018 the UK co-hosted the Global Disability Summit, a landmark moment for global disability rights which led to a set of 170 commitments being made by national governments, multilaterals, the private sector and civil society. We have set standards that others have followed.

We will continue this global leadership. We will share lessons and progress on our strategy commitments through engagement on the international stage including the UNCRPD reporting process led by the Disability Unit.

**The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will continue its global leadership on disability rights and commits to:**

- **launching the enhanced FCDO Disability Inclusion Strategy and embedding disability rights in the new International Development Strategy in 2021**
- **making the UK's Official Development Assistance spend – £10 billion in financial year 2021 to 2022 – disability inclusive**
- **establishing a new FCDO External Disability Board, with its first meeting to take place by December 2021 to inform our international work on disability rights and inclusion**



# Tracking progress

**We have set out the immediate action government departments will take to improve disabled people's everyday lives.**

We will publish an annual report which summarises the progress we have made in implementing the strategy. To ensure that the immediate actions we have committed to in this strategy are taken forward in a timely manner, we will publish the first of these annual reports by summer 2022. This report will:

- detail progress made on the departmental actions outlined
- assess progress on delivery of the 5 elements across government
- update on the additional action we will take on crime, social participation, and accessible products and services

We want disabled people across the UK to experience the same positive outcomes as non-disabled people. We will continue to track progress in a range of areas:

- **employment** – around half of disabled people aged 16 to 64 years in the UK were in employment compared with around 8 in 10 for non-disabled people<sup>97</sup>
- **education** – 23% of disabled people aged 21 to 64 years in the UK had a degree as their highest qualification compared with 39% of non-disabled people<sup>98</sup>
- **loneliness and wellbeing** – the proportion of disabled people who reported feeling lonely “often or always” is almost 4 times that of non-disabled people<sup>99</sup>
- **victims of crime** – around 1 in 7 disabled people aged 16 to 59 years in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the last 12 months, compared with about 1 in 20 non-disabled people<sup>100</sup>

We recognise that these measures, which we regularly report on through the Office for National Statistics, do not tell the full story. These measures do not necessarily reflect disabled people’s everyday experience, and they do not

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97 Outcomes for disabled people, ONS UK: 2020

98 Outcomes for disabled people, ONS UK: 2020

99 Outcomes for disabled people, ONS UK: 2020

100 Outcomes for disabled people, ONS UK: 2020

reflect the experience of disabled children and their families.

For that reason, we will also be co-developing new indicators with disabled people to track progress in implementing this strategy. The true measure of this strategy's success will be whether disabled people feel their lives have improved.

**By summer 2022, the Disability Unit will publish, following engagement with disabled people, a set of indicators and a dashboard to track the impact of the National Disability Strategy.**

Ministerial Disability Champions have committed to personally drive the implementation of their department's commitments in the strategy.

**The Minister for Disabled People will chair a quarterly meeting of the Ministerial Disability Champions to drive progress.**

# **Part 3:**

## **A cross-government effort to transform disabled people's everyday lives**





## Cabinet Office

**“At the centre of government and as host of the Disability Unit, the Cabinet Office will support disabled people to play a full part in public life by removing barriers to participation in our democracy, public appointments and working in the Civil Service. I am proud to be part of the team of Ministerial Champions driving this strategy forward across government.”**

**Julia Lopez MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the Cabinet Office**

The Cabinet Office supports the Prime Minister and ensures the effective running of government. It is also the corporate headquarters for the UK government.

The department is committed to putting disabled people at the heart of government policy making and service delivery.

As the centre of government, the Cabinet Office will drive change across all government departments, holding departments to account for the actions in this strategy and encouraging departments to work together on priority areas for disabled people. The department will drive better outcomes for disabled people across the full breadth of the department's portfolio, from Civil Service reform to honours to voting.

The Cabinet Office commits to:

- better recognise the exceptional contribution of disabled people to the UK through the honours system
- launch a new website and application system to transform how disabled people can access public appointments, alongside increased outreach with disability networks
- develop a new principle that arm's length bodies offer disabled non-executive directors on their boards the ability to do their duties remotely, if they so wish
- ensure the exemplar accessibility of government buildings, through the work of the Government Property Agency



- introduce legislation to require returning officers to consider the needs of people with a wide range of disabilities
- progress work to require landlords to make reasonable adjustments to the common parts of leasehold and commonhold homes
- run a campaign to help the public sector make mobile applications accessible, and raise awareness of how people can raise complaints about inaccessible websites
- consult on workforce reporting on disability for large employers, exploring voluntary and mandated workplace transparency, and publish a set of next steps
- lead by example, taking further measures to make the Civil Service a brilliant place to work for disabled people
- including timely workplace adjustments, support for staff disability networks and continuing to grow our multi-award winning work experience and development programmes
- lead a multi-year programme to improve the availability, quality, relevance and comparability of government disability data

- leverage government's procurement spend to drive better outcomes for disabled people
- review our approach to ensure we are engaging in the best ways and with a sufficiently diverse group of disabled people
- explore the establishment of a world-leading Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology
- expand the Disability and Access Ambassadors programme
- assess the assistive and accessible technology needs of disabled people in England
- through the Central Digital and Data Office, deliver a single government account for users' personal and business needs, benefitting many disabled people
- improve the accessibility of government communications
- work across government to drive further action on crime, accessible products and services and social participation

- through Places for Growth, help create a fully inclusive and diverse workforce for the long term, not the short term, and developing talent opportunities across the Regions and Nations of the UK



## **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

**“The publication of this strategy brings into sharp focus the need to place disability at the heart of our policy making. I am committed to grabbing this opportunity with both hands, so my department, working with the rest of government, can effect proper, meaningful change to the lives of disabled people.”**

**Amanda Solloway MP  
Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Department for Business, Energy and  
Industrial Strategy**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is building a stronger, greener future by fighting coronavirus, tackling climate change, unleashing innovation and making the UK a great place to work and do business.

The department is committed to making the UK a great place for disabled people to work and do business.

The department will bring forward new rights and entitlements for disabled people and carers in the workplace, as well as exploring the case for targeted support for disabled entrepreneurs.

BEIS commits to:

- challenge UKRI and other research stakeholders to use future innovation challenges to accelerate innovation in assistive technologies
- explore what additional targeted support should be made available for disabled people who want to start a business
- launch a consultation on making flexible working the default, unless employers have good reason not to
- progress the government's commitment to introduce unpaid carer's leave
- set up a new advice hub on employment rights for disabled people, jointly with Acas



## **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport**

**“I am delighted to be DCMS’ Ministerial Disability Champion. As a department that touches the lives of everyone, DCMS has ample opportunity to contribute positively to the disability agenda. As well as the department, I am dedicated to the commitments we have included in the strategy and will work with our stakeholders to achieve life changing outcomes for those with protected characteristics.”**

**Baroness Barran  
Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and  
Sport**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) helps to drive growth, enrich lives and promote Britain abroad.

The department is committed to enriching disabled people's lives, tackling loneliness and making the UK the most accessible tourist destination in Europe by 2025.

DCMS will take action to close the participation gap between disabled and non-disabled people in sport, arts and culture. It will also consider options to tackle the persistently poor accessibility of private sector websites.

DCMS commits to:

- introduce a new free arts access card to make it easier for disabled and young people to enjoy the arts and cultural venues across the UK
- make the UK the most accessible tourism destination in Europe
- work with Sport England to address the inequalities faced by disabled people in sport and physical activity
- explore how to improve the accessibility of private sector websites



## Department for Education

**“I am absolutely committed to supporting disabled children to reach their full potential and lead a happy and fulfilled adult life. Education plays a key part in making this a reality. I have seen many examples of early years settings, schools and colleges doing great work, ensuring the right support is available at the right time. But I know that this isn’t yet available to everyone, and the forthcoming review of the Special Educational Needs and Disability system will be key to delivering better outcomes for disabled children.”**

**Vicky Ford MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Department for Education**



The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

The department wants all children and young people to receive an education that pushes and supports them to reach their full potential. A good education should be a gateway to a good job and good work can support good health, independence and participation in society.

The department will take action to improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), some of whom are disabled children. It will also look beyond their time in education, and take action to improve transitions to adulthood.

DfE commits to:

- completing a wide-ranging review of actions to improve outcomes for children with SEND
- increasing by £730 million in financial year 2021–22 the high needs revenue funding for children and young people with more complex SEND

- investing a further £300 million to improve access to existing provision in schools and make accessibility adaptations for children and young people with SEND in financial year 2021 to 2022
- extending continuing professional development in how to support pupils and students with SEND to teachers and other staff and funding the training of more educational psychologists to provide specialist advice
- investing £8.6 million in financial year 2021 to 2022 to strengthen the participation of parents and young people in the SEND system, ensuring they have a voice and have access to high quality information, advice and support
- driving improvements to the supported internships programme
- increasing the number of disabled people entering into apprenticeships and ensuring that those who start an apprenticeship go on to thrive



## **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

**“It is important that the benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing from engaging with nature are available to all of us. Access to blue spaces provides even higher wellbeing benefits than access to nature generally. We are committed to making the England Coast Path as accessible as possible for disabled users, so that more people can experience the landscape and wildlife of England’s beautiful coast.”**

**Victoria Prentis MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Department for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs**

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for safeguarding the UK's natural environment, supporting our world-leading food and farming industry and sustaining a thriving rural economy.

The department is committed to ensuring that disabled people experience the benefits of regular access to nature.

The department will take action to remove physical barriers to accessing the natural environment.

Defra commits to:

- improve access to national paths and trails in England
- deliver a £5.77 million investment in green social prescribing, which will benefit disabled people
- implement the 25 Year Environment Plan, ensuring nature is accessible to everyone



## Department of Health and Social Care

**“I will continue to champion inclusivity in policy making across this department and very much welcome the opportunity of this cross-government strategy to drive change and improve the lives of disabled people. Improving health and care outcomes for disabled people is a priority for DHSC, the NHS and adult social care and cuts across all that we do.”**

**Helen Whately MP**

**Ministerial Champion for the Department of Health and Social Care**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) supports ministers in leading the nation's health and social care system to help people live more independent, healthier lives for longer.

The department is committed to improving disabled people's health and care outcomes.

Alongside progressing plans to transform adult social care and modernise the Mental Health Act, the department will take further action to build the evidence base for longer-term improvements and to educate frontline staff.

DHSC's refreshed Autism Strategy aims to improve the lives of autistic people and their families and carers in England. It builds on and replaces the preceding adult autism strategy 'Think Autism', published in April 2014. It extends the scope of the strategy to children and young people for the first time.

DHSC commits to:

- put disabled people front and centre in social care reform
- strengthen the data and evidence base to support policies that will transform outcomes for disabled people
- tackle the stigma and discrimination that disabled people face every day to improve quality of life and reduce inequalities
- ensure that health and social care staff understand learning disability and autism to reduce health inequalities



## Department for Transport

**“I am committed to ensuring our transport network is accessible for all as we Build Back Better from COVID-19. This National Disability Strategy, alongside our Inclusive Transport Strategy, Gear Change, Bus Back Better, and rail reform commitments, sets out how we will deliver an accessible transport network that underpins this government’s ambition to build a society that works for all.”**

**Chris Heaton-Harris MP  
Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Department for Transport**

The Department for Transport (DfT) works with agencies and partners to support the transport network that helps the UK’s businesses and gets people and goods travelling around the country.

The department plans and invests in transport infrastructure to keep the UK on the move.

The department is determined to achieve an accessible transport system for all.

The department will take action to make it easier and more pleasant for disabled people to use public transport like trains and buses and to travel by road, whether privately or via taxis and private hire vehicles.

DfT commits to:

- enable disabled people to travel with confidence by addressing staff training, information and the attitudes and behaviours of others
- improve the accessibility and safety of the rail network
- improve the accessibility of buses, bus stations and bus stops
- tackle shortages in community transport drivers
- improve accessibility of taxis and private hire vehicles
- make 'lifeline' ports more accessible
- create new accessibility standards for electric vehicle charging points





## Department for Work and Pensions

**“I feel privileged to have been able to contribute as Minister for Disabled People to improving the lives and opportunities for disabled people. It has been not just my job but my passion for a number of years. Much has been achieved, but there is still so much more to do. The National Disability Strategy, coupled with the Health and Disability Green Paper and other actions that DWP is taking, will provide a fantastic platform to level up for disabled people across the UK.”**

**Justin Tomlinson MP**

**Minister for Disabled People and Ministerial Disability Champion for the Department for Work and Pensions**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. As the UK's biggest public service department, it administers the State

Pension and a range of working age, disability and ill-health benefits to around 20 million claimants and customers.

The department is committed to enabling disabled people to live independently and move into work where this is possible.

Alongside the strategy, DWP published its Health and Disability Green Paper *Shaping Future Support*. This sets out the department's ambition to support and empower disabled people to achieve their full potential.

The department is also publishing the response to the Health is Everyone's business consultation. The response ensures that better support is provided to people in work.

DWP will take action to remove the barriers disabled people face at work and set out proposals to improve access to support for disabled people who cannot work.

DWP commits to:

- set out proposals to improve the experience of accessing disability benefits

- pilot an Access to Work Passport to help disabled people progress through education and move into employment
- make available a passport for all young disabled students, including those receiving Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), when they leave university
- encourage employers to hire disabled people and to create inclusive workplaces by reviewing Disability Confident, strengthening the Voluntary Reporting Framework, and disseminating best practice to employers
- expand trials for supported employment services



## **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**“Disability rights and inclusion means a world where all people with disabilities are engaged, empowered and able to exercise and enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others. With an estimated 1 billion people with disabilities across the world, approximately 15% of the population, it is an issue that must not be ignored. I am proud of the UK’s legacy of global leadership and my department’s continued commitment to embedding disability rights throughout our international responses, including COVID-19 and climate change.”**

**Wendy Morton MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Foreign Commonwealth and Development  
Office**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) pursues the UK's national interests and projects the UK as a force for good in the world. The department promotes the interests of British citizens, safeguards the UK's security, defends the UK's values, reduces poverty and tackles global challenges with our international partners.

The UK has played a critical role in raising the profile of disability internationally. FCDO will continue this global leadership role.

FCDO commits to:

- launch the enhanced FCDO Disability Inclusion Strategy and embedding disability rights in the new International Development Strategy in 2021
- make the UK's Official Development Assistance spend – £10 billion in 2021 to 2022 – disability inclusive
- establish a new FCDO External Disability Board, the first meeting to take place by December 2021
- create more opportunities for disabled people to serve in MI6 and GCHQ



## Home Office

**“I am so pleased to be promoting the work of the National Disability Strategy in the Home Office. It is vital that we continue to promote policies which support our disabled employees, customers and the communities we serve.”**

**Victoria Atkins MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the Home Office**

The first duty of the government is to keep citizens safe and the country secure. As such, the Home Office plays a fundamental role in the security and economic prosperity of the United Kingdom.

The department has a vital role to play in keeping disabled citizens safe and secure.

The department will continue to tackle disability hate crime, as well as tackle the accessibility skills gap as part of a cross-government effort with other departments.

The Home Office commits to:

- develop a new cross-government strategy to tackle the crime and disorder that undermines the quality of life for everyone, including tackling disability hate crime
- engage disabled people and disability stakeholders in the development of the new hate crime strategy
- tackle the accessibility skills gap
- create more opportunities for disabled people to serve in MI5



## Ministry of Defence

**“It is mission critical that we maximise the diversity and capability of the workforce throughout the Defence sector. The National Disability Strategy is an important contribution to this goal, levelling up opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in the life of this country, including its defence. This is why there is a focus on increasing the number of opportunities for those who have been classed as disabled to join Defence. It is also why we will continue to ensure that more people who become disabled through the course of their service can continue to serve. And for those who cannot we will ensure they receive the best support as veterans, recognising and nurturing their talents and ongoing contribution to our national life.”**

**Leo Docherty MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Ministry of Defence**



The Ministry of Defence (MOD) works to protect our people, territories, values and interests at home and overseas. Through strong armed forces, and in partnership with allies, it ensures our security, supports our national interests and safeguards our prosperity.

The department will be an exemplar for inclusion, and will create more opportunities for disabled people in both the armed forces and in civilian roles.

The department will take action across all parts of the defence workforce – from armed forces, to civilians, to the armed forces of the future like the National Cyber Force – to improve opportunities for disabled people to serve.

MOD commits to:

- publish a plan to bring more disabled people into the civilian workforce
- explore how to increase opportunities for disabled people to join Defence
- deliver the Armed Forces Recruitment Programme to recruit more diverse military personnel

- use the National Cyber Force as a pathfinder for inclusivity
- share best practice and insight from the veterans' adaptive sport community with disability organisations and providers of sport and activity



## Ministry of Justice

**“As a barrister, part-time circuit judge and now as Lord Chancellor, I’ve too often seen people with conditions like autism and dyslexia struggle through their brush with the law. It might be that they get lost in the complex legal language or fall foul of it simply because it’s harder to make sense of things. That’s why I launched a ‘Call for Evidence’ to better understand the issues experienced by this cohort, as an important first step to driving important improvements in how our criminal justice system responds to neurodiversity.”**

**Robert Buckland MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Ministry of Justice**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) works to protect and advance the principles of justice in England and Wales. Its vision is to deliver a world-class justice system that works for everyone in society.

The department is committed to improving support for disabled people if they come into contact with the criminal justice system.

The department will take action to improve the accessibility of the courts, improve support for neurodivergent offenders, and enhance the rights of disabled victims of crime.

MoJ, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service commit to:

- attract more disabled people to the magistracy
- set out enhanced rights for disabled victims
- progress legislation in 2021 as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to amend common law so that deaf people who need a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter can do jury service
- develop a neurodiversity training toolkit for frontline staff

- improve provision for disabled users, including through the accessibility of the estate and use of digital support



## **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

**“As Ministerial Champion I will drive forward my department’s commitments to create more accessible homes, streets, towns, and communities. I am particularly proud that since 2015 government funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant has more than doubled to £573 million in 2021 to 2022, providing more than 450,000 adaptations. I hope that new guidance on delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant leads to even more adaptations in future.”**

**Eddie Hughes MP**

**Ministerial Disability Champion for the  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s (MHCLG) job is to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area.

The department is committed to driving improvements so that disabled people experience great places to live and work every day.

The department will take action across housing and planning to create more accessible homes and communities.

MHCLG commits to:

- boost England's housing supply for disabled people by setting out plans to increase the accessibility of new homes, options for supported housing and home ownership
- ensure the safety of disabled people in buildings, for when there are emergencies
- consider how we can support projects that will increase high street accessibility for disabled people, through the design of any future local growth funding
- accelerate the roll out of specialist Changing Places toilets across the country
- encourage local authorities to build and refurbish more inclusive playgrounds for disabled children

# Annex A: Thank you

We would like to recognise and thank the huge number of organisations and individuals who have provided us with views and lived experience during the development of this strategy.

This includes the over 16,500 disabled people, parents and carers who completed the UK Disability Survey, the 11 participants in our lived experience research, and the hundreds of organisations and disabled people who have spoken to us as part of our regular stakeholder forums, roundtable discussions and workshops.

Responsibility for the content of this strategy rests solely with government, but we want to thank the organisations below who have so generously shared their time and insights.

Ability Net

Activity Alliance

Andrew Miller MBE, previously Disability and Access Ambassador for Arts and Culture

Andrew Roach Talent Ltd

Asif Iqbal MBE, Deaf Parenting UK



ATLAS

Autistica

Barclays

British Association for Supported Employment

British Association of Social Workers (BASW)

Campaign to End Loneliness

Care and Repair England

Centre for Social Justice

Claire Dove CBE, Crown Representative VCSE

Contact

Disabled Children's Partnership

Disabled Motoring UK

Dominic Abrams, Kent University

Dr Heather Smith, Disability and Access

Ambassador for Countryside and Heritage

East Midlands RSN

East of England RSN

Education Endowment Fund

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Family Fund

Getting Things Changed Project, University of  
Bristol

Good Things Foundation

Greater London RSN

Johnny Timpson, previously Disability and

Access Ambassador for the Insurance Industry

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MS Society  
National Citizen Service  
National Development Team for Inclusion  
National Network of Parent Carer Forums  
NATSPEC  
NATSPEC Student Parliament  
Netflix  
Newbold Hope  
North East RSN  
North West RSN  
Northern Housing Consortium  
Office for Rail Regulation (ORR)  
Onward  
Policy Connect  
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Professor Nicolas Bacon, University of London  
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Innovation (UKRI)

Professor Brian Lamb, Derby University  
Professor Melanie Jones, Cardiff Business  
School  
Rehabilitation Officer for Deaf and Hard of  
Hearing People  
Respond  
RNID  
Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD)  
Royal College for Speech and Language Therapy  
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)  
Sainsbury's  
Scope  
Sense  
Shared Lives Plus  
South East RSN  
South West RSN  
Sport England  
Start Change  
Stephen Brookes MBE, previously Disability and  
Access Ambassador for the Rail Industry  
TechUK  
The Careers and Enterprise Company  
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association  
The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)  
The National Network of Parent Carer Forums  
(NNPCF)

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Tina Emery and Mrunal Sisodia OBE  
UCL  
UK Sport  
UNLtd  
Versus Arthritis  
VODG (Voluntary Organisations Disability Group)  
West Midlands RSN  
Whizz Kidz  
Working Together With Parents Network  
Yorkshire and the Humber RSN





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