

## Making the case for inclusive and accessible communities.

In July 2013 the Government published its disability strategy **Fulfilling Potential – Making it Happen**. An important part of the strategy focuses on communities being inclusive and accessible.

Disabled people of all ages and backgrounds have told us they aspire to participate in every aspect of life – home and family life, community life, education, training, employment and volunteering. They want to have the opportunity to participate in society and be valued for their contribution.

Communities that are inclusive to all people enable everyone to participate in and access all aspects of society. Particularly important to disabled people are attitudes, transports, housing, social participation, friends and family, information and access.

We know that significant progress has been made in some communities to make them inclusive and accessible. But, there is evidence to show that progress in other areas is patchy and that why on the 4 September 2014, **Mark Harper, Minister for Disabled People** launched a challenge to all communities to do more to be inclusive and accessible.



The Accessible Britain Challenge aims to motivate communities including local businesses, employers, service providers and community/voluntary/disabled groups to do more to be inclusive and accessible by engaging and working with disabled people to remove barriers that get in the way of them being full and active participants in their community.

We want businesses and service providers to recognise the potential spending power that disabled people and their families have, and the contribution they make towards thriving local economies.

### Key facts and figures

- There are 12.2 million disabled people in the UK today.<sup>1</sup> Most of us will experience disability at some point in our lifetime. We are challenging the businesses, employers, service providers and other organisations in local communities to do more to become more inclusive and accessible for disabled people. Can yours afford not to?
- Disabled people account for 20% of the customer base of the average UK business. It makes good business sense to be accessible to them!
- Households with a disabled person have a combined income of £212bn after housing costs.<sup>2</sup> This figure represents a huge contribution to thriving local economies. It is growing as the population grows and ages, and the number of disabled people grows with it. If your business is not fully accessible to disabled people, you are missing out on your share of this massive spending power.

<sup>1</sup> Family Resources Survey, 2012/13.

<sup>2</sup> Family Resources Survey and Households Below Average Income data, 2012/13.

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- There are currently 4.3 million mobility aid users in the UK, and the value of the sector for aids and adaptations is £510m,<sup>3</sup> and projected to grow. The wider assisted living technologies market that this is only part of provides manufacturers and retailers with plenty of scope for innovation, and the opportunity to increase margins, selling at competitive prices while yielding profit.

### Disabled People as customer

The vast majority of disabled people's spending power is therefore spent on non-disability-specific goods and services. Your products are already aimed at disabled people as customers (and suppliers and stakeholders) whether or not you realise it.

Many businesses are adapting to capitalise on that spending power through, for example, Shopmobility schemes, store improvements and employee training.<sup>4</sup> Accessible businesses have the edge over their less accessible competitors. Don't get left behind!

The rise of internet shopping provides disabled people with the opportunity to spend their money away from high streets and shopping centres that they don't find to be accessible enough.

A third of people eligible for social care support now receive a personal budget to spend on their own care and support. Personal budgets have a combined value of £1.5bn. A quarter of personal budgets are for £10,000 pa or more.<sup>5</sup> Through personal budgets, disabled people are becoming commissioners and consumers rather than service users alone. The competitive new market in care and support services is quickly growing. The accessibility of an organisation, its services and the information about them is clearly a key factor for disabled customers choosing where to spend their money.

Increasing your accessibility won't just benefit disabled customers. The carers and families of disabled people also share their aspirations, and accompany them when shopping or seeking a service.

There are 3.3 million families with children under five who use pushchairs and prams,<sup>6</sup> and who can therefore only use business premises with good physical access. A range of people who don't consider themselves to be disabled can benefit from accessible and assistive technology. The growth in internet sales makes it increasingly important that everyone can access your website.

### Inclusive employment, stronger business

45% of disabled people are already in employment.<sup>7</sup> 87% of disabled people and 92% of non-disabled people say that employer attitudes towards disabled people in the workplace are supportive.<sup>8</sup>

By considering disabled applicants for a role, employers increase the number of high quality potential employees available to them.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Office of Fair Trading, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> See the Accessible Britain Challenge resource pack for further information and ideas.

<sup>5</sup> Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Office for Disability Issues, [Growing your customer base to include disabled people: A guide for businesses](#), 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Labour Force Survey, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, 2013.

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Inclusive employers can make use of the perspectives and insights of disabled employees to tap into the large and lucrative disabled customer base and an understanding of its needs. They create an innovative workforce that reflects the diverse range of customers it serves and the community in which it is based.

Disabled employees may bring additional skills to the business, such as British Sign Language. If utilised by the employer, these skills can greatly improve communications with customers.

Organisations in the Best Place to work ranking of 2010, which are seen as accessible to disabled employees, have sickness absence levels which are 30% lower than the national average.<sup>10</sup>

One British multinational telecommunications company has found that disabled employees remain with them for longer than non-disabled recruits. 67% of disabled people recruited have over one year's service, compared with 46% of non-disabled employees. The company's monitoring has shown that disabled employees perform as effectively, if not better than, their non-disabled colleagues, including if they have not worked for a number of years.<sup>11</sup>

Should a disabled employee require a reasonable adjustment to be made in the workplace in order for them to do their job, the average cost is generally low, and significantly less than the financial advantages to employing a capable, productive applicant; or the costs of replacing an employee. If the costs of adjustment are significant, however, help is available through Access to Work with costs that go beyond what is considered reasonable.<sup>12</sup>

Two-thirds of disabled people acquire their impairment as working age adults (16-64).<sup>13</sup> In supporting them to remain in work, savings are made in re-recruitment and retraining costs; retention of skills and experience; and maintenance of productivity. The average cost of replacing an employee is between £6,000<sup>14</sup> and £30,000<sup>15</sup>. In many cases, the cost of reasonable adjustments to retain an employee (just £3,100 on average<sup>16</sup>) is paid through Access to Work.

Organisations already known for employing disabled people enjoy the added benefit of the enhancement of their reputation, and the increase in custom this reputation drives.

Employment of disabled people can help to demonstrate a commitment to employees and to work with, and build on, individuals' skills and needs.

It is estimated that closing the employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people would boost economic growth by £13 billion.<sup>17</sup>

38% of disabled people in England take part in formal voluntary work, and 42% in civic participation.<sup>18</sup> It is estimated that volunteering as a whole adds in the region of £21.5 billion to the UK economy.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The [Disability Confident campaign](#) provides examples of good practice in employing disabled people

<sup>10</sup> Business Disability Forum, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Clear Company, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> [Employers' Guide to Access to Work](#).

<sup>13</sup> Experiences and Expectations of Disabled People, 2008

<sup>14</sup> CIPD Annual survey report, Recruitment, Retention and Turnover, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Oxford Economics, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, 2012/13.

<sup>17</sup> Social Market Foundation, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Community Life Survey, 2012/13.

<sup>19</sup> National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2009.