

Pat Russell – Head of the Office for Disability Issues

Pat started the meeting and introduced Justin Tomlinson, the Minister for Disabled People.

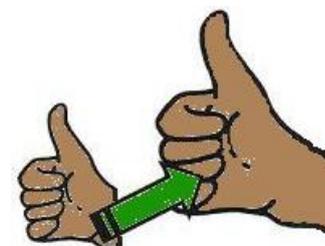


Justin Tomlinson – Minister for Disabled People

The Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting. He shared his experiences of being the new Minister for Disabled People with everyone at the Forum. He told everyone about how he is working with the government to make sure they think about disability and how to get rid of barriers.



He is working with the Minister for Sports, Tracey Crouch, to get rid of barriers for disabled people when taking part in and watching sport.



He is also working with Andrew Jones and Lord Holmes on making transport more accessible.



The Minister also talked about the work done with Channel 4. This work was to show disability and disabled role models in a good way.



The Minister talked about wanting to cut in half the gap between the number of disabled people and non-disabled people in work. He wants to do this by working with businesses through the Disability Confident Campaign and through Access to Work.



The Minister answered a number of questions from Forum members:

- Not enough money for social care – the Minister said he would work with his team to make sure that money is spent in the right way.
- The need for the Access to Work team to have the right training on learning difficulties - the Minister said that this was important. He talked about expert Access to Work teams. He said that he would check that the teams had learning disability training.



- The need for transport staff to have disability awareness training – the Minister said that this was a good idea and that he had already talked about this with Lord Holmes and Andrew Jones. He had also spoken to them about how to deal with disability awareness with taxi drivers.



- Making sports stadiums accessible and dealing with people using abusive words, this means saying horrible things about a person because of their disability – the Minister said that he knows about this problem.



He said that first he is going to work on dealing with this in the Premier League; this is the top group of football teams in England. The Minister is working on making the premier league accessible, but he also knows that this is a problem that he needs to work on in other areas of sport.



- Someone asked for funding for Deaf Olympics – the Minister said that he wants there to be more chances for everyone in sport. He asked members to take part in the government consultation being done by Tracey Crouch.



- Buildings being planned in an accessible way – the Minister said that he will be meeting with the people that he works with to talk about this. He talked about the success of the Built Environment Professional Education project; this project was about making sure that the people who design buildings, study accessibility as part of their education.

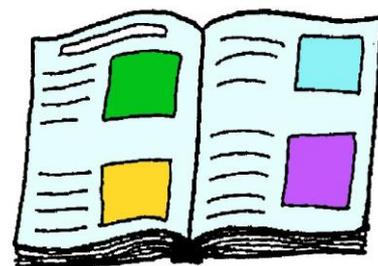


- Worries about how closing the Independent Living Fund will affect people were talked about. People were worried that this would mean that Disabled people would have to go back to living in residential care – the Minister asked for a letter about this to be sent to his office and he will reply to it.



Pat Russell told everyone that the next part of the meeting would be about **Disability Hate Crime**

The Crown Prosecution Service talked about the work that they are doing to tell people about Disability Hate Crime. Also about the work they are doing to make sure that more people are found guilty in court. One of the things that they are working on to do this is a guide. They asked the forum to read the **draft** copy of the guide and feedback.

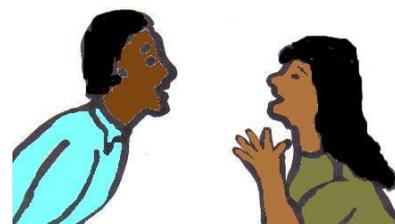
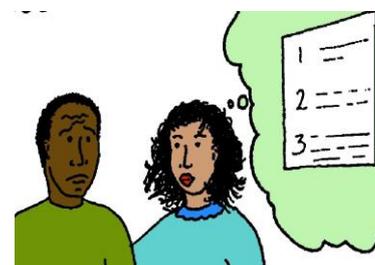


Crown Prosecution Service: this is the government service that takes cases to court when someone has taken part in a crime.

Draft: this is the copy of a document or plan that is not final and changes can still be made.

The Disability Hate Crime Network talked about how they understand Disability Hate Crime. Some of the things that can be a hate crime are:

- Verbal abuse: this is when someone says horrible things to another person.



- Damaging someone's property: this is when a person breaks or harms something that does not belong to them.
- Taunting someone: this is when a person says horrible things to someone or will not leave them alone; it makes the person feel scared or worried.
- Offensive gestures: this is when someone makes threatening signs using their hands.
- Physical attack: this is when someone hurts another person's body. This could be by punching, pushing or kicking them.



They have four disability centres in Lancashire. Trained disabled people give support to people reporting hate crime and going through the courts.



The Home Office spoke about their plan which has three ways of working to stop Disability Hate Crime:

- Stop hate crime from happening
- Make sure more people report hate crime and have the support to do it
- Make the way that hate crimes are dealt with better



Home Office: this government office is in charge of law around crime, drugs, people coming into the country and passports, and terrorism.

There was then feedback from forum members:

- Work with Disabled People's User Led organisations to make sure more people are supported to report Hate Crime.
- Make sure teachers, care workers, health workers and those working in public organisations have training on Disability Hate Crime.
- Make sure Black Minority Ethnic disabled people are thought about in any work.



- People knowing more about Hate Crime in Northern Ireland needs to be worked on.
- In Scotland, disability organisations have been working on Toolkit films to make sure people know about Disability Hate Crime.



Pat Russell pointed out that there is a chance to take part in a **Task and Finish Group** to support this area of work. The Group will be asked to give comments on the Crown Prosecution Service draft guide and the Home Office draft action plan.



Task and Finish Group: this is a group that carries out reviews of services or policies and how they affect people. They talk to people and organisations affected by the issues being looked at. They then write a report about what they have found out and what needs to be done moving forward.

New Ways of Working for the Forum - Two new members were welcomed onto the forum, the Alzheimer's Society and the Council for Disabled Children.

These two new members were invited to join the forum after the review of the forum which is done every year. The Equality and Human Rights Commission will also come to the meeting as observers; this means that they can come and watch the forum meetings and be a part of the Forum's work.



Last year there were not so many chances to give to take part in policy planning because the last Government was coming to the end of its time running the country. We will now take the chance to really link in to the Forum across government.



Meetings will be twice each year, with more work being done by email in between meetings. There will be chances for Forum members to have a say in what goes on the agenda in the future. The items on the agenda need to be areas that can be talked about in an open way to make sure that the Forum works in the best possible way.



Cutting the Employment Gap in half – the role of the new Health and Work Unit was shared.

The Unit will work from the point of view that 'Work is good for you'. It will look at what can be done to help people with a health condition stay in work or how people can be supported to go back to work.



It has said that the Department of Health and the Department for Work and Pensions working together on this, is a good idea. Forum members then talked in groups and the following things were said:



Barriers:

- Need to deal with housing, transport, education/skills and social care issues.
- Social care needs to be given on time to make sure that disabled people can get to work.
- Institutions need to support people into work.
- Some people do not tell anyone that they have a mental health problem, this is an issue. This is because they then do not look for help.



- Work programmes should not just look at finding a person any job, they should look at training for long-term employment.



- Disabled people are worried that by trying to work they could lose their benefits.



Challenges:

- Employers, service providers and local organisations need to do more to help disabled people into work.
- The **Business Innovation and Skills Department** and the Department for Education need to be a part of the new unit.

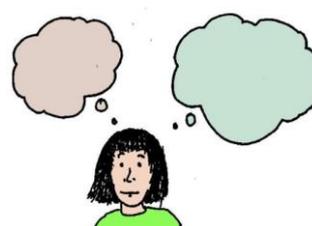
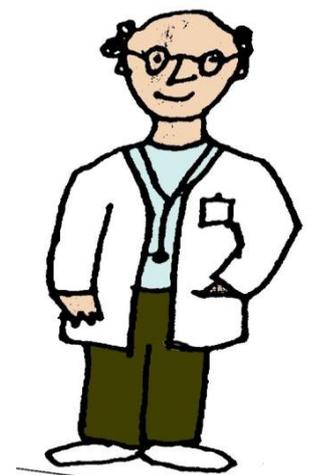


Business, Innovation and Skills Department: this is a government department that helps the country to grow through education and skills.

- Giving disability employment support is an expert area and organisations need the right skills, experience and money to work well.



- Mental health issues are a problem for homeless people and people living in homeless shelters. This is not being looked into at the moment.
- Health issues must be looked at before people can get into employment.
- We need to think about what makes people want to work and get more confidence.
- The two main departments working in this unit work in different ways. One uses the Medical Model and the other uses the Social Model. This needs to be thought about.
- The National Employment Saving Trust is running 6 month training sessions for employers. This should be looked used as an example when thinking about any other training.



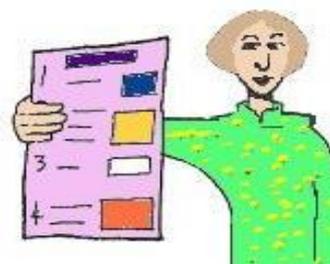
Opportunities:

- Looking at making sure people stay in work and giving the right support.
- Local organisations are in the best place to look at how to deal with problems, as they know about local issues.
- Sending out the same message is important. Health care staff and local authorities should see getting people into work as a possible goal of their support.
- Big organisations should set the example by employing disabled people.
- More chances for disabled people to take part in **apprenticeships**.



Apprenticeships: this is where a person learns how to do a job, on the job. They usually have a set number of hours to work and are quite low paid.

- The Department of Health, Autism Strategy was said to be a good way of working to learn from.



- Disabled people should be a part of giving advice or **mentoring** on the boards of organisations. This is so that they can have a say in decisions.

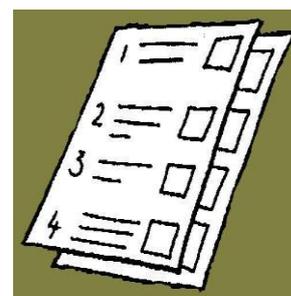


Mentoring: this is where a person gives advice or trains another person.

- Make sure that the NHS links in with local employment projects. This is so that employment is part of a person's plan for getting better.



- Get together a full list of all projects and pieces of work around employment. This is so that disabled people know what is on offer. This could be used to make sure that the same services are on offer in all parts of the country.



- Make sure there are chances on offer for disabled children, who in the future will be adults looking for work.



- Health and work should come together to:
 - Support and teach people about their new health condition and how to deal with it and make sure they can stay healthy



- At the same time support and train employers. This is to help them to understand and make the **reasonable adjustments** needed. This is so that the person can keep on working and the organisation can keep a skilled member of their team.



Reasonable adjustment: this is a change that is made to make something or a place accessible to a disabled person.

Future of Employment Support for Disabled People with Health Conditions

It was said that funding for future employment support is being thought about. This will be done in time for when Work Choice and the Work Programme come to an end. This gives us a chance to think about how to best support people in the future.



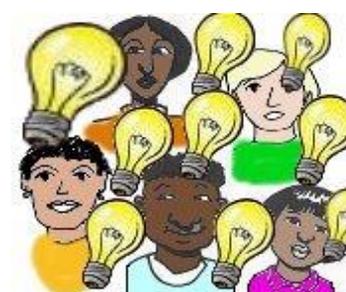
The Forum was asked to think about the following things:

‘Would you like to see more support given by Work Coaches in Jobcentres? For example should they be spending more time with people?’



Answers:

- Employment support needs to be separate from the Job Centre. This is because part of the Job Centres work is forcing people to work and punishing them for not sticking to the rules. This means that it is difficult to build a relationship or have trust.
- Support being given by independent local organisations could lead to the chance for people to set up **social enterprises** and disabled people setting up their own businesses.



Social enterprise: these are organisations that work like businesses, but they aim to help society rather than just working to make money.

- The quality of support given by Job Centres needs to be high and it needs to be the same in all Job Centres. Disability Employment Advisors are seen as working in a good way and more of these would be good.



- This should be turned around and be about what works for the customer as the same people and organisations will keep on offering the same services.



- Smaller organisations can offer one to one **peer support**.



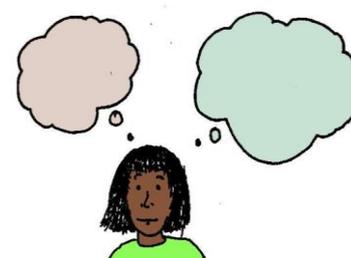
Peer support: This is where disabled people use their own experience to support other disabled people.

‘Should Work Coaches be spending more time with people at the beginning when they are applying for the Employment Support Allowance? This would be whilst they are waiting for their Work Capability Assessment.’

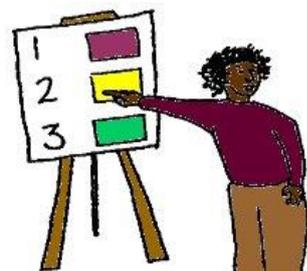


Answers:

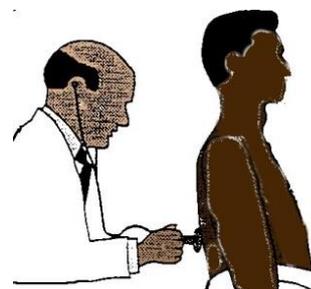
- Supporting people at the beginning is a good idea
- It was said that more work support may not always be a good idea. For example if someone is very unwell. People should be able to decide whether they want this support.
- The adviser should have the right training around disability and health issues.



- There need to be different ways of working, with different people offering services, trying out different types of support.



‘Should we be doing more to support people to deal with their health condition? For example more health support for people with a mental health condition or therapy for people with back pain?’



Answers:

- People should not have to get support; it should be the person’s choice.



- The Department of Health and health care professionals need to be a part of this. Support should not just be given by the Department for Work and Pensions. Any decision should be made by a person with the right medical training.



- Professionals could be dealing with a health condition as well as with employment support. For example, if someone is losing their sight they may need support on independent living and work. Their health condition and work support should both be looked at together.



‘Should we spend more on Peer Support?’

Answers:

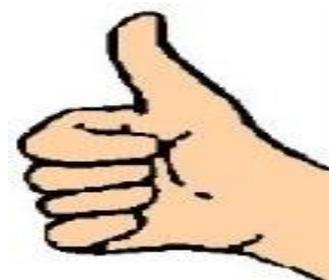
- There should be more money spent, especially on mental health peer support.
- Peer support and role models are very important in supporting people and giving them the support they need to move forward.



‘Should we spend more on local employment support?’

Answers:

- The way that Work Choice works is good and could be used in other services. The problem with Work Choice was that the number of people being passed on to the service was low.
- There need to be changes to the **commissioning** of Work Choice. This is because organisations only get paid when they get results. It stops smaller organisations with the right skills and experience from supporting their local disabled people.



Commissioning: this is the way that services are planned and bought by a local authority or national government.

‘Should we spend more on support services like Work Choice?’

Answers:

- The main organisation working in this is called ATOS. They have coaches working for them who don't understand disabled people's needs.



Government should spend money on smaller organisations that understand the local issues; rather having one organisation gives a national service. We need to look at what works. Services need to work in a way that looks at a person's whole life.



‘Is Work Experience important?’

Answers:

- Work experience is very important. It gives people the chance to try a number of different jobs to see what works for them. However, it should be up to the person to decide if they want to do work experience.



Pat Russell gave a summary of what had been talked about during the day. She thanked everyone for taking part. She said that the points from the group talks would be fed back into each policy area.

