



**A FAIRER  
SCOTLAND  
FOR DISABLED  
PEOPLE:  
EMPLOYMENT  
ACTION PLAN**



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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## CONTENTS

■	<b>MINISTERIAL FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
■	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>7</b>
■	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>
■	<b>SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN DISABLED PEOPLE</b>	<b>14</b>
	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	15
	WHAT YOU TOLD US:	18
	ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN:	19
■	<b>SUPPORTING DISABLED PEOPLE TO ENTER EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>22</b>
	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	23
	WHAT YOU TOLD US:	26
	ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN:	27
■	<b>YOUNG PEOPLE AND TRANSITIONS</b>	<b>30</b>
	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	31
	WHAT YOU TOLD US:	34
	ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN:	34
■	<b>MEASURING PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS</b>	<b>37</b>



## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

Through the new National Performance Framework, the Scottish Government has set out how we intend to create a Scotland that supports all its people to flourish, and to collectively share in its success. Critical to achieving this is a thriving economy that is driven by inclusive growth, and through which we ensure everyone who wishes to is able to access fair and sustainable employment. We recognise that this is not currently the reality for all, and that there is huge potential within our communities that remains underutilised. This includes many talented disabled people, for whom employment can be an important part of independent living – yet too many are unable to access the labour market, or have had a negative experience.

[A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People](#) (2016) outlined five key ambitions as part of the Scottish Government's response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including 'Decent incomes and fairer working lives'. A key element of this is the commitment that was made to at least halve the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the working age population (the disability employment gap).

We are already taking steps to address this. Fair Start Scotland, which commenced in April 2018, is providing support to disabled people to find work and treating them with fairness, dignity and respect. More effective integration of employment support and services is also key. In [No One Left Behind: Next steps for employability support](#) (2018) we have set out actions we will take towards achieving this and, in so doing, improve support for disabled people to enter, stay and progress in work.

But there is far more to do. This plan outlines the next steps we will take to work across government, with employers and other partners to meet our ambition to halve the disability employment gap. It also sets out the timescales for doing so.

We are committed to improving disabled people's access to and experience of employment. We will continue to press for the devolution of services (and resources) to support disabled people in employment, including Access to Work, whilst aiming to offer appropriate and humane support to those who are unable to work.

It is clear that the Scottish Government has a leadership role to play in reducing the gap, both as a policy maker and employer, but it is not something we can achieve on our own. To realise the ambition will require collective leadership and action across public, private, and third sectors. We have agreed a new Partnership Working Framework in Employability with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), which will help facilitate this. So too will the actions in this plan strengthen our partnership with business ensure the disability employment agenda remains at the heart of our fair work ambitions.

Strong labour market conditions alone will not be enough to halve the gap, and we cannot ignore the fact that labour market outcomes for disabled people consistently lag behind those of the wider working population for largely structural reasons. Significant change in culture, attitudes and practice is therefore required and we will work with employers, their representative bodies, local and UK Government, and other key stakeholders in the coming years to effect this change.

This Action Plan will continue to evolve. We will update it based on the identified priorities of disabled people, the support needs of employers, and as the labour market changes. It sits alongside the Fair Work Action Plan and recognises the multiple characteristics of disabled people. For this reason, it will align with other work to address inequality and inclusive growth, whether in the labour market or more generally, including the [Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#) and forthcoming Gender Pay Gap Action Plan, and refresh of Keys to Life, Scotland's Learning Disability Strategy, as well as our [wider reform of employability services](#).

We wish to thank our Expert Advisory Group, including disabled people's organisations, for their input to date. Disabled people's lived experience is central to shaping the action we take, and we will continue to work in partnership with disabled people and their organisations, ensuring their voices are at the heart of our work.



**Jamie Hepburn**  
Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills

## A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan - Strategic Framework

The following table provides an overview of how key action plans and strategies work together to support our ambition for reducing the disability employment gap.

<b>Ambition</b>	To address barriers to employment for disabled people and seek to reduce, by at least half, the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the working age population by 2038.				
<b>Purpose</b>	To focus on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through sustainable and inclusive economic growth.				
<b>Drivers</b>	Supporting Employers to Recruit and Retain Disabled People		Supporting Disabled People to Enter Employment		Young People and Transitions
<b>Driver Outcomes</b>	Employers are supported to improve employment practices and provide inclusive workplaces		Disabled people can access the right support, at the right time, to enable them to enter fair work		All disabled young people who want to work, can
<b>Action areas</b>	Up to £1 million towards a Public Social Partnership to support employers to improve employment practice		Develop and deliver a new devolved Specialist Employability Support Service		Reform employability support
	Work with employers to deliver a campaign to promote the positive business case for employing disabled people		Address the barriers faced by disabled parents living in households affected by child poverty		Develop a new Careers Strategy to better align career information, advice and guidance services in Scotland
	Demonstrate public sector leadership through the setting of targets for Scottish Government recruitment of disabled people		Pilot support similar to Access to Work to support disabled people undertaking work experience or work trials		Improve outcomes for disabled young people in transition from school to training, education or work through <i>Developing the Young Workforce</i>
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	Labour Market Strategy			Scotland's Economic Strategy	
<b>Aligned Plans/ Programmes</b>	Economic Action Plan	Fair Work Action Plan	Gender Pay Gap Action Plan	A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People	Child Poverty Delivery Plan
	<i>Fair Start Scotland: Devolved employability services</i>	<i>Keys to Life: Scotland's Learning Disability Strategy</i>	<i>No-One Left Behind: Next steps for the integration and alignment of employability support in Scotland</i>		Review of Employability Services in Scotland
<b>National Outcomes</b>	We have thriving and innovative businesses with quality jobs and fair work for everyone		We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society		We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
	We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally		We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential		We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

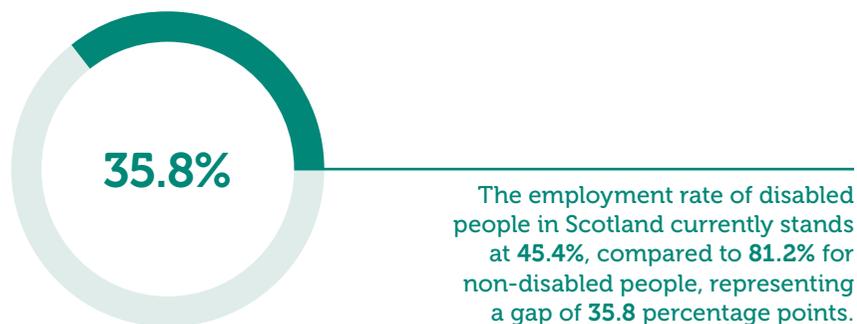
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines the action Scottish Government will take to meet its ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap in Scotland. Here we summarise: the nature of the challenge; some of the initial key actions that will be taken during 2019 – 2021; and how we will continue to develop a collective approach to achieving the ambition, including through an annual update of this plan.

### Disability Employment Gap

The Disability Employment Gap refers to the difference in employment rates between disabled people and the rest of the working age population. As at 2016, our baseline year, the gap stood at 37.4 percentage points. This means to meet our ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap, we will need to reduce it to 18.7 percentage points.

Achieving this goal, and improving disabled people's experience of employment, is a long term challenge. The gap in Scotland is similar to that at a UK level and, based upon the current rate of change, it has been estimated it could take 200 years to halve the UK gap<sup>1</sup>. Clearly progress has been too slow and it is time to be much more proactive. The Scottish Government will therefore commit to a step change in approach by setting targets for 2023 and 2030, and to halve the disability employment gap by 2038. Achieving this goal will require a concerted national effort. But anything less is no longer an option – for the dignity of disabled people trying to progress in work, for the life chances of young disabled people, and to meet the needs of Scotland's economy. This goal is one of the most important public policy challenges of our time, its success will have significant positive impacts on non-disabled as well as disabled people, and we must work together to meet our shared ambition.



1 [https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Work-and-Health\\_Halving\\_the\\_Gap\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Work-and-Health_Halving_the_Gap_FINAL_1.pdf)

### Supporting employers to recruit and retain disabled people

A refreshed partnership with employers is critical to achieving a step change in employment outcomes for disabled people. We know that employers not only want to be able to recruit the right people, with the right skills, at the right time – they also want to retain and develop talent. Yet disabled people tell us that they continue to encounter examples of poor employment practice, and are not always offered appropriate support by employers, meaning that even when they are in employment, they often find it difficult to progress. We outline below some of the steps we will take to improve support for employers, and how we will lead by example to improve employment practice:

1. The Scottish Government will set a target for the employment of disabled people in its own workforce. We will detail this in the Recruitment and Retention Plan which we will publish during the spring 2019.
2. We will invest up to £1 million to establish a new Public Social Partnership, involving employers, government and disabled people's organisations, to develop, test, and implement solutions to the barriers that employers face in hiring and retaining disabled people. Alongside this, we will appoint a business leader to advise us on the steps we could take to reduce the perceived risk of recruiting people with fluctuating health conditions.

3. Working with employers and disabled people, we will develop a campaign in 2020/2021 to promote the positive business case for employing disabled people directly to employers, ensuring that they are fully aware of the talents and opportunities that disabled workers provide. Taken together with other actions in this plan, this campaign will form part of a refreshed and sustained partnership with business to demonstrate the benefits of employing disabled people and a more diverse workforce generally.

### Supporting disabled people to enter employment

Fair work is good for the economy and for all of us as individuals: our health and wellbeing, economic independence, and social connections. However, disabled people are being denied the same access to employment as non-disabled people which, in addition to impacting negatively on a personal level, means as a society we are wasting considerable talent. Disabled people have told us they want to be able to access the right support, at the right time, to develop the skills to enter fair work. They want to feel valued and emphasise that support will need to be responsive and tailored to the individual's needs. Key actions we will take on this are set out below:

4. Specialist Employability Support contracts, currently operated by the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), will end in December 2019. We will create a bespoke

Scottish employability support service, to be in place from January 2020, to meet the needs of disabled people for whom more mainstream employment support is not suitable.

5. Invest up to £6m of additional resource from the Child Poverty Delivery Fund to co-produce with disabled parents and disabled people's organisations a pilot fund, targeted towards areas with the highest levels of child poverty and the lowest levels of employment of disabled people, to identify and address the barriers disabled parents face to entering and sustaining employment.
6. We will invest up to £500,000 of new funding to provide support similar to Access to Work to disabled people undertaking work experience or work trials. This will enable greater participation in this key element of employability development.

### Young People and Transitions

The move from school to education, training or work is a critical time for all young people. While some reported positive experiences, feedback from a number of disabled people, their parents and carers and disabled people's organisations has shown that this is not consistently the case. They said that there is much more the Scottish Government can do to ensure that every disabled young person who is able to and wants to work, has

access to the right advice and support to enable them to move successfully from school towards fulfilling their potential. Key actions we will take on this, include:

7. Building on the [Seven Principles of Good Transitions](#), and broader recommendations received from sector experts, disabled young people and their families and carers, we will work across government to improve transitions into education, learning and work for disabled young people.
8. Following the [review of current support](#), we will develop and put in place a new flexible and responsive employability delivery model that will support people – including young disabled people – in ways that work for them.
9. We will launch a new Careers Strategy in 2019 to align career information, advice and guidance services in Scotland. This will reinforce our commitment to enabling all individuals, including young disabled people, to receive high quality support to fulfil their career potential.

### Measuring impact and Next Steps

To achieve our ambition of halving the employment rate gap in the next 20 years, the employment rate of disabled people will need to increase by at least 1 percentage point every year. We will review progress annually and set the following interim goals:

- By 2023 we want to increase the employment rate of disabled people to 50%;
- By 2030, we aim to achieve an employment rate of disabled people of 60%.

In addition to the ambitious headline employment rate targets we have set, we will set out a range of indicators to assess progress within each of the three themes outlined in this plan, including the pay levels of disabled people and the type of occupations disabled people move into.

In order to monitor progress and ensure that the plan continues to evolve, we commit to the following:

- Establishing a Scottish Government Delivery Programme Board to oversee implementation of the plan;
- Establishing a Leadership Action Group (co-chaired by disabled people's organisations and employers) to extend the influence and drive the development of further action across the private, third, and public sectors;

- Undertaking further engagement with disabled people and wider stakeholders to continue to inform our approach;
- Launching a website by Spring 2019, which will host the most up to date information on the action being taken and progress made in achieving the ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap. It will also include links to good practice information on disability and employment.

It is important that the Scottish Government shows leadership on this issue, but we cannot reduce the gap on our own – all of society needs to play a part and to sustain activity over time if we are to successfully address the barriers that prevent disabled people from realising their full potential in employment.

**This plan is the first step in meeting our ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap, and it will be followed with annual updates. We will continue to work with disabled people, their representative organisations, employability service providers, and employers across the public, private, and third sectors to ensure we all play a role in both shaping and taking action on this issue.**

## INTRODUCTION

**The Scottish Government is focussed on creating a more successful Scotland, with opportunities for all to flourish via sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Ensuring that the rights of disabled people are respected and maintained is central to inclusive growth. That is why in 2016 we announced our ambition to at least halve Scotland’s disability employment gap – the difference between the employment rates of disabled and non-disabled people. At that time, the employment rate for disabled people was 42.8% compared to 80.2% for the non-disabled working age population, representing a baseline disability employment gap of 37.4 percentage points. This means that in order to at least halve the gap, we need to reduce it to at least 18.7 percentage points.**

Latest figures show the employment rate of disabled people in Scotland currently stands at 45.4%, compared to 81.2% for non-disabled people, representing a gap of 35.8 percentage points<sup>2</sup>. While it is encouraging that there has been a small reduction in the last few years, Scotland’s disability employment gap remains large and enduring.

Labour market outcomes for disabled people have consistently lagged behind those of the wider working age population throughout the economic cycle. This suggests that reasons beyond the health of our economy drive Scotland’s persistent disability employment gap. Significant labour market barriers exist for disabled people but can also be influenced by gender, race, religion, sexuality and class. These barriers may include stereotyping and discrimination. When someone shares more than one of these characteristics, disadvantage can be compounded. For example, the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that where pay gaps by ethnicity exist, they become larger for disabled people<sup>3</sup>. We also recognise that there is diversity within the disabled community, and that some groups are disproportionately impacted by the disability employment gap (e.g. learning disabilities with an estimated employment rate of 7%, or those with mental health problems). It may, therefore, be appropriate to identify impairment-specific actions in some cases.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2017, ONS.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-107-the-disability-pay-gap.pdf>

We know that seeking to at least halve the disability employment gap is an ambitious commitment, but disabled people deserve no less. The opportunity to fair and sustainable work, on an equal basis with others, is a fundamental human right and is enshrined in Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)<sup>4</sup>. Critically, this includes both the acquisition of employment within a labour market that is open, inclusive and accessible to disabled people, and the right to appropriate support for those who may acquire an impairment in the course of existing employment.

Whilst it is important that the Scottish Government leads by example, we know that we cannot deliver this commitment alone. Disabled people are crucial in helping to ensure that the action taken is relevant to their needs, supportive of their aspirations, and enables them to reach their potential. We will ensure their voices are at the heart of the this work as we take it forward.

We know that employers will require support too. This action plan includes commitments to ensure that employers are challenged and supported to recruit, retain and promote disabled people within their organisation. We will showcase and build on existing good practice, including examples of positive action and we will develop a refreshed partnership with business to drive forward this agenda. We will work with employers to develop support on those issues

where they have indicated they would welcome guidance, including in relation to supporting employees with mental health problems. It is important to recognise that by delivering more inclusive workplaces and improving employment practice for disabled people, we improve employment for all, as well as securing a range of benefits for employers. A more diverse workforce provides a wider perspective, offering insights for decision-making, and leading to the delivery of services that better meet the needs of all the people of Scotland.

We know that many of the barriers to employment for disabled people, but also the potential solutions to address these, reside across a range of policy areas – including, for example, education, transport, and health. We have worked across teams to develop this plan, recognising the connection between issues. The work on child poverty in particular stands out, however we have also already identified some other key areas where we can work across sectors to begin to address known barriers. Initial action is focussed on steps that the Scottish Government and its agencies can take – this is part of the leadership role we know we must take. But it is clear the plan will need to evolve through a collaborative approach and with a level of commitment that will be sustained for a significant time. This will require cross-party, cross-Scotland support, leadership, and action.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html>

Being out of work has a detrimental impact on many disabled people's lives. Helping employers recruit the best talent and enabling disabled people to follow their aspirations is the right and just thing to do. It also makes sense for our economy and public finances – both now and as our labour market and population changes over the longer-term. Without action, in a decade's time, disabled people could still be no more likely to be in work. Reducing the disability employment gap by half could increase Scotland's annual economic output (GDP) by up to 3.5% in real terms, the equivalent of around £4 billion<sup>5</sup>. This would enhance the significant contribution already made by disabled Scots to our economy.

We recognise that 2019 could be a time of unparalleled change for the Scottish Labour Market – exiting the European Union could be highly disruptive, and the impact on the economy is as yet unknown. Our action plan must therefore be capable of responding to any shifts, as well as being proactive – leading, adapting and evolving to meet the needs of an ever changing labour market.

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<sup>5</sup> Office of the Chief Economic Adviser/Scottish Government modelling.

# SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN DISABLED PEOPLE

*Employers are supported to  
improve employment practices  
and provide inclusive workplaces*



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

**Employers of all sizes and in all sectors have a key role to play in reducing the disability employment gap. We know that employers not only want to be able to recruit the right people, with the right skills, at the right time – they also want to retain and develop talent.**

Disabled people tell us that when they are in employment, they often find it difficult to progress. We also know that many disabled people feel forced to leave employment and the labour force, due to a lack of access to appropriate and timely support should they acquire an impairment or health condition, or if the impact of an existing impairment intensifies.

There are similarities but also differences between how and where disabled and non-disabled people work. Disabled people work in every sector of our economy, but are more likely to work fewer hours and earn less than non-disabled people. They are also more likely to work for small employers than non-disabled people.

Analysis conducted by the Department for Work and Pensions<sup>6</sup> found that disabled people in work in the UK were almost twice as likely to fall out of work as non-disabled people. In the context of reducing Scotland's disability employment gap, this highlights the need to consider ways of not only helping disabled people who would like to work to move into employment, but also of more effectively supporting those who are already in work to be able to remain there and progress.

We need to ensure that employers are supported to attract and recruit from the vast, and growing, pool of talent that exists within Scotland's disabled community, to retain their skilled employees should they become disabled, and to invest in workforce development, to enable progression.

<sup>6</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/644090/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644090/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack.pdf)



## CASE STUDY: SOCIAL SECURITY SCOTLAND – CLIENT ADVISOR RECRUITMENT

**Social Security Scotland – the new executive agency responsible for managing devolved benefits – aims to be a progressive and responsible organisation reflecting Scottish society. Currently many Scottish public sector bodies have low numbers of staff who identify as disabled people. When recruiting client advisors, the agency therefore made a concerted effort to ensure its workforce is diverse. It set up an assurance group and invited organisations representing disabled people to input in relation to the recruitment process (e.g. making recommendations around accessibility, formats for applications, etc.). The resourcing team carried out large scale engagement to widely promote their jobs, and to ensure candidates knew they would be supported and treated with dignity and respect throughout their recruitment journey.**

Each candidate identifying that they considered themselves to be disabled, and subsequently invited to interview, was contacted to ascertain any additional support needs or if reasonable adjustments were required to be put in place (e.g. additional time for the assessment). Social Security Scotland also removed qualifications as an entry requirement to

apply for the Client Advisor roles, and replaced it with a bespoke skills quiz, testing candidate’s literacy and numeracy. The agency received nearly 600 applications, 43 (7.4%) of whom answered ‘yes’ to the question ‘Do you have a health condition or disability?’ within the Diversity Monitoring form, while 61 (11.17%) candidates applied under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme. Of those invited to interview, 9.8% identified as disabled people. Nearly all of the disabled candidates who attended an interview were offered a post - 16 of the 90 posts offered (i.e. 17.8%).

The work by Social Security Scotland provides a strong foundation on which to continue to build improved recruitment practice, and key lessons learnt include:

- engaging early with stakeholders, and providing more time to understand the needs of diverse groups and further develop an inclusive approach sends a positive message;
- running sessions with stakeholders who work directly with potential candidates was critical in raising awareness of the recruitment approach;
- collaborative relationships are crucial. The engagement with key partners helped to understand the barriers to recruitment – perceived and real, and to remove these where possible;
- regular contact with candidates was vital to inform of progress. This meant that applicants didn’t feel forgotten and having a dedicated telephone helpline meant candidates always had a means to contact the agency.



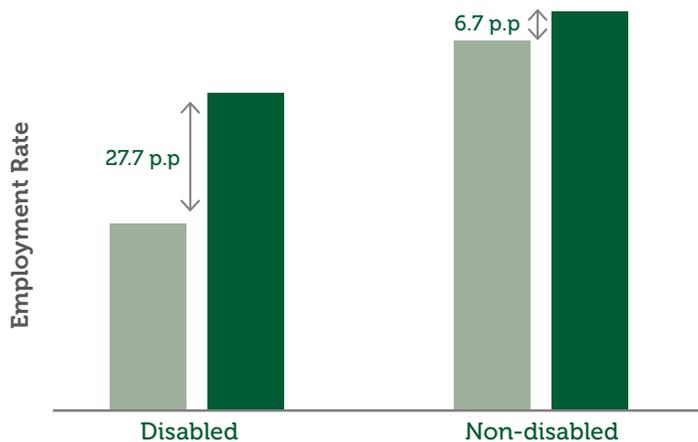
## CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS OF DISABLED PEOPLE

Disabled people inactive in the labour market are more likely to want to work than non-disabled inactive people.

**IN SCOTLAND, 125,000**

working-age disabled people hold qualifications at degree level or above.

Disabled people with a degree are less likely to be employed than non-disabled people without one.



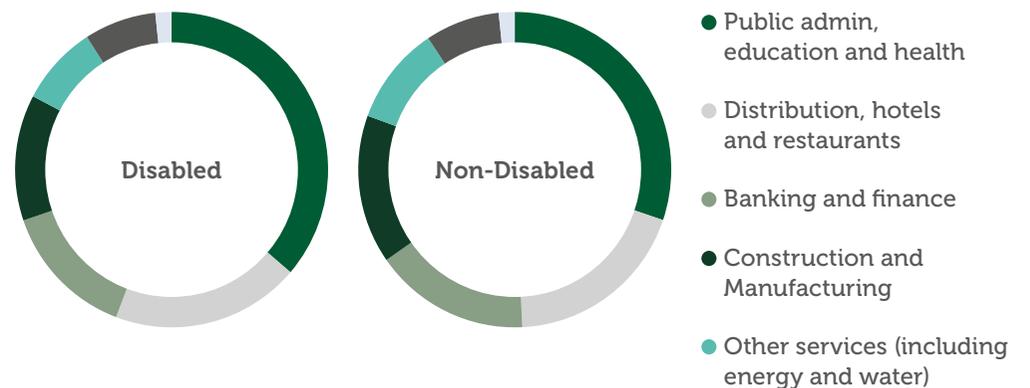
● Below degree (inc none)  
● Degree or Higher

**1 IN 5**

working-age people in Scotland are disabled.



Disabled people are employed across all sectors of Scotland's economy and in broadly similar proportions to the non-disabled workforce.





### WHAT YOU TOLD US:

- The focus must shift from a deficit model that suggests individual disabled people need to change, to addressing the barriers and discrimination that society creates.
- The Scottish Government, and wider public sector, should become exemplar employers of disabled people, and ensure that other employers can learn from best practice.
- The landscape of employer engagement and support should be simplified, to ensure that employers can readily access the necessary support to enable them to improve recruitment and retention of disabled employees.
- The positive business case for increasing inclusion of disabled people in the workplace must be made more strongly.
- Disabled people themselves should be involved at an early stage in the design and implementation of services – both those aimed at supporting employers, and those that will directly impact on disabled people.
- Workplaces must be accessible and employers need to better understand their legal duties.
- The right support to manage health conditions should be available when needed.
- Disabled people should be helped to understand their rights and how to access redress if these are not upheld.



### **ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN:**

**To ensure that the public sector becomes an exemplar employer, we will:**

- Take the first steps following the recent [consultation](#) on increasing disabled peoples' participation in the public sector workforce, and set a target for the employment of disabled people in the Scottish Government (SG) workforce. We will detail this in the Recruitment and Retention Plan for Disabled People which we will publish in spring 2019. This will set out actions SG will take (e.g. improving data collection) as an employer to support disabled people in the workplace, and we will share learning from the experience to encourage other public sector organisations to follow our example.
- Ensure that Scottish Government becomes an employer of choice for disabled people, at all levels. This will include within the Senior Civil Service, which has already set a target of 13% disabled new entrants by 2025.
- The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland set an ambition to increase to 15% the percentage of applications from disabled people for regulated public appointments. The Commissioner reports annually on Scottish Government performance against this target, and we will learn from the approach to date.
- Draw on the work undertaken by Social Security Scotland to improve the recruitment experience for disabled people and achieve a more diverse workforce, and enable other employers to learn from this best practice.

**To ensure that employers have the skills and confidence to tap into the vast pool of talent that exists in the disabled community, we will:**

- Invest up to £1 million through the establishment of a new Public Social Partnership, involving employers, government, and disabled people's organisations, to develop solutions to address the gaps in employer knowledge and expertise in attracting, recruiting and retaining disabled people.

- Ensure that Scotland continues to be a world-leading entrepreneurial nation. We will work with Business Gateway to improve access to knowledge and information on the benefits of recruiting disabled people.
  - Work with Scottish Enterprise; and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to ensure that case managers have the skills and knowledge to promote the business benefits of the employment of disabled workers to businesses seeking to grow.
  - As part of its review, redesign the disability equality element of the Business Pledge, including developing a more appropriate and meaningful indicator to support more employers to meet the Business Pledge commitment on more diverse and balanced workforces.
  - Work with employers, disabled people, and their organisations to develop a sustained campaign from 2020/2021 to promote the positive business case for employing disabled people, and target it directly at employers who could benefit the most from this talented labour pool.
  - We will appoint a business leader to advise us on the steps we should take to support, or incentivise, businesses to reduce the perceived risks of recruiting people with fluctuating health conditions.
  - Alongside our work with the public sector, we will do more to encourage all employers to develop more inclusive working practices. We will therefore explore, working together with business:
    - extending conditionality for public sector grants and procurement to cover transparency around the numbers of disabled people employed;
    - putting plans in place to develop more inclusive workplaces to support disabled people to stay and progress in work; and
    - providing more effective support and advice to SMEs.
- To achieve a co-ordinated and aligned employability and health pathway for those with mental health problems, we will:**
- Improve access to support for those experiencing mental illness , including in 2019-2021:
    - Bringing together the learning from projects now underway as part of the [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#) to develop pathways that enable those seeking to enter or remain in work to access appropriate and timely mental health and employability support;
    - Work with employers to support the development of mentally flourishing workplaces.

- As part of the Health & Work Support pilot<sup>7</sup> in Dundee and Fife running from 2018-2020:
  - Introduce and utilise a Health & Work Indicator (across health and other services) to allow better understanding of the extent of mental health barriers to employability;
  - Link this to improvement work being undertaken to develop referral pathways into Health & Work Support, enabling more participants to engage with and access the service;
  - Test and evaluate the impact of additional mental health training and interventions provided by clinical staff, including the availability of additional *Well In Work* planning and support for participants and employers;
- We will review the delivery and quality of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in Fair Start Scotland to ensure that participants are receiving the right support to enter work.
 

**To enable disabled people to get the support they need to re-enter the workplace after a period of ill health, we will:**
- Provide disability management and return to work support training for 300 healthcare, local government and third sector professionals over 5 years.
- Continue to explore – including as part of the Scottish Government’s current review of health and work policy (due to report in Spring 2019) how best to embed fair work as a clinical outcome within the NHS, recognising that doing so will enable the development of work-related clinical standards, pathways and tools which will enable more people to secure the work-relevant health support they need to move into and stay in work. We will ensure that our work complements the work that is already being undertaken by NHS Health Scotland.
 

**Finally, to ensure that employees are aware of their respective workplace rights we will:**
- Work with partners, including STUC and disabled people’s organisations, to ensure disabled people have access to information and guidance about their legislative employment rights and how to take action when those rights are denied. This will include identifying gaps in existing advice services, and making investment available to develop proposals to address gaps.
- Through an expanded Workplace Equality Fund, work with employers and trade unions to improve workplace practices for the benefit of disabled people.

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<sup>7</sup> Bringing together employability and health support for those at risk of losing their job or who have very recently become unemployed.

# SUPPORTING DISABLED PEOPLE TO ENTER EMPLOYMENT

*Disabled people can access the right support, at the right time, to enable them to enter fair work*



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

**Everyone should have the right to work if they want to. Fair work is good for the economy and for our individual health and wellbeing – in addition to providing a source of income, it can also foster social interaction, contribute to our sense of happiness and self-esteem, and support our independence. Those who are denied equal access to employment, including many disabled people, are all too familiar with the negative consequences – they risk feeling isolated, can experience poverty, and are denied the right to fulfil their potential. At a societal level, we also lose out, failing to realise the benefits of a huge talent pool and diversity of experience.**

Meeting our ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap will require a combination of sustaining work for disabled people, supporting disabled people to secure existing vacancies, and also creating new job opportunities. To halve the gap by 2038, the employment level of disabled people will need to increase by around 130,000<sup>8</sup> – over the past year, it has increased by around 19,000. The scale of the challenge will be impacted by a number of factors and could be even greater if, for example, the proportion of disabled people increases (beyond the ageing of our population), or if the non-disabled employment rate increases.

In 2017 there were fewer than 40,000 unemployed disabled people but 321,000 disabled people classed as economically inactive<sup>9</sup> in Scotland. To meet our ambition, we will need to actively engage disabled people currently defined as inactive to support them to move into work. Although rates of inactivity are much higher for disabled people (49.2%) than non-disabled people (16.1%), this does not reflect less willingness to work. Inactive disabled people (26.8%) are more likely to want to work than non-disabled inactive people (21.5%) and two thirds of disabled people who are inactive cite poor health as the reason<sup>10</sup>. We must ensure that those disabled people who can work and who want to work are supported to secure that opportunity.

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Chief Economic Adviser/Scottish Government modelling.

<sup>9</sup> People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.

<sup>10</sup> Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2017, ONS.



## CASE STUDY: DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY FOR MENTAL HEALTH – FIFE

Funded by the Scottish Government's Employability Innovation and Integration Fund over 2017-19, Fife Council, the Opportunities Fife Partnership and the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership have commissioned work to transform employment outcomes and support for people with mental health conditions, achieving a 30% increase in outcomes in the area. The vision is that *'people with mental health problems in Fife are supported to aspire in life and work and can easily access appropriate support as when they are ready to make the journey (back) into work.'*

The project team includes representatives from NHS Fife, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, DWP, Fife College, Fife Council, specialist and generalist employability services, mental health community groups and, critically, people with lived experience of mental health conditions. Frontline staff, employers and employer engagement staff have also been involved.

Phase One of the project has focussed on employability services, with good progress made on delivery of the recommendations for change. This includes development of a Mental Health and Work Indicator and provision of basic mental health awareness training to help frontline staff have an appropriate conversation about how clients' mental health might affect their journey to work, and ensure they are accessing the most suitable support. An increased and more stable funding platform is being created for specialist employability support for people with significant mental health barriers from 2019-22.

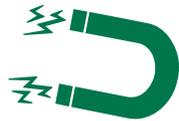
Phase 2 of the project is well underway and brings together views from all partners on what taking a whole systems approach could achieve. Delivering Differently has also launched a Pilot Fund to test different ways of delivering mental health employability services and there are 9 pilot projects underway.





## OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYERS

The potential rewards for employers who are prepared to ensure that they attract, recruit and retain disabled people are vast...



### ATTRACTING NEW EMPLOYEES

**86,000**

The number of disabled people who are classed as inactive but would like to work.

**36,000**

The number of disabled people who are unemployed and actively looking for work.



### RECRUITING NEW EMPLOYEES

**£75**

Average cost to employers for a reasonable adjustment.

**£3,000**

Average award given through Access to Work scheme.



### RETAINING CURRENT EMPLOYEES

**57**

Average age that an individual becomes disabled.



### WHAT YOU TOLD US:

- Employability support should be person-centred and tailored to meet the needs of the individual.
- Access to Work, the UK Government fund offering financial support to disabled people in work, needs to be promoted to ensure more disabled people (and employers) are aware of it. It is also complex and can be difficult to apply for successfully.
- Disabled people often feel undervalued - they want more job opportunities that offer flexible working to enable them to apply (and to be successful in applying) for jobs that take full account of their skills and qualifications.
- Disabled people currently in receipt of benefits often fear taking up employment in case it does not work out and they have to re-negotiate the welfare system. There should be a safety net in place to support disabled people during the transition to work.
- There should be easier access to tailored employment support, recognising that some disabled people will require support to last longer than mainstream programmes do, and that job outcomes may not always be appropriate.
- Work experience and internships should be long enough for disabled people to gain skills and demonstrate their ability. However, those participating should not be exploited as part of a long-term unpaid workforce.
- Scottish Government and public sector should make greater use of the levers available to them through the significant level of procurement and City Region/Regional Growth Deals, to secure more job outcomes for disabled people from public investment.
- The additional barriers faced by disabled people living in rural areas need to be addressed, including poor and often inaccessible public transport, and a lack of reliable high-speed broadband services.



### **ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN:**

#### **In relation to poverty and in particular child poverty we will:**

- Invest up to £6m of additional resource from the Child Poverty Delivery Fund to co-produce with disabled parents and disabled people's organisations a pilot fund, targeted towards areas with the highest levels of child poverty and the lowest levels of employment of disabled people, to identify and address the barriers disabled parents face to entering and sustaining employment. This recognises the link between disability and poverty and – working alongside existing employment services - in the longer term will support the achievement of our ambitious child poverty and disability employment gap targets.
- From late 2019, invest £12 million from the Child Poverty Delivery Fund to implement new Parental Employability Support, to help those on low incomes, including disabled people, to secure fair work and an increase in their earnings.

#### **In relation to Access to Work we will:**

- Call for the devolution of Access to Work to enable the creation of a more accessible, comprehensive and a distinctly Scottish service. In addition, we will work with disabled people and other partners to develop support similar to Access to Work to disabled people undertaking work experience or work trials, investing up to £500,000 from 2019/20.
- Promote Access to Work funding across Scotland. This will build on promotion undertaken since the launch of A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People and include awareness raising with employers, as well as the range of agencies supporting disabled people, including Citizens Advice Scotland, disabled people's organisations, and local authorities.
- Work with disabled people's organisations to develop and pilot a peer-to-peer Ambassadors programme, involving those who have already successfully gained funding, to provide support to those applying for Access to Work.

### In relation to employment support we will:

- Subject to clarification of the UK Government funding settlement, following the end of the UK Government's Specialist Employability Support contracts in December 2019, create a bespoke Scottish support service (in place from January 2020) to meet the specific needs of disabled people for whom more mainstream employment support is not suitable. We will explore the demand for and feasibility of additional investment in the new service.
- Draw on the evaluation work in progress for Fair Start Scotland in order to: quantify how the service is improving labour market outcomes for disabled people; improve disabled people's experience of Fair Start Scotland; and inform development of future employment services. For example, we are using a programme of focus groups with service users to record views of what has worked well to move them into appropriate and sustainable work to shape what our future employability services provide for disabled people.
- We will work with Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) employers, Fair Start Scotland providers, disabled people's organisations and others to raise awareness of the 11,000 additional jobs being created in ELC by 2020. We will work with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Early Years Scotland to deliver a recruitment event in January 2019 for disabled people and other groups under-represented in the ELC workforce to provide information on ELC career pathways, skills and qualifications. The event will support the next phase of the national ELC recruitment campaign in early 2019, and run alongside a programme of activities in locations across Scotland designed to raise awareness of and promote the additional jobs that will be available in ELC as we move towards delivery of our transformational expansion of funded ELC from 2020. We will also consider what specific interventions we could make to improve the diversity of the ELC workforce, based on research on barriers faced by under-represented groups in the workforce - including those with disabilities - and which will be finalised in early 2019.

### In relation to skills we will:

- Publish a Future Skills Action Plan in 2019, which will set out the Scottish Government's strategic approach to ensuring Scotland has a skilled and productive workforce, both now and in future. In developing the plan, we will identify opportunities to support enhancement of disabled people's skills, recognising the proportion of disabled people with low or no qualifications is much higher than that of non-disabled people.

### In relation to procurement and social enterprise support we will:

- Develop our [sustainable procurement tools](#) and guidance to help buyers across the public sector in Scotland identify and pursue equality outcomes in procurement. We will also highlight the opportunity and need to use public procurement in Scotland to

achieve employment of disabled people. We will continue to promote awareness of disability employment as a ministerial priority to contractors across the procurement landscape, building on work undertaken in 2018 by EHRC, Inclusion Scotland and Scottish Government Ministers.

- Work with City Regions and Regional Growth Deal areas to ensure that they use all available levers to increase employment rates for disabled people by:
  - addressing barriers to employment (e.g. the lack of accessible public transport); and
  - supporting disabled people, from those in school to older workers, in Deal regions to develop the necessary skills to meet the current and future needs of the labour market.
- Respond to and implement recommendations, where agreed, of the short life working group set up to consider how supported businesses and social enterprises could contribute to increasing employment rates for disabled people. The group will report early in 2019. Ministers will respond in Spring 2019.

**We will also:**

- Work across Government (including Transport Scotland) and with transport providers, Local Authorities, disabled people's organisations, the [Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland](#), and disabled people themselves to deliver the actions in the Accessible Travel Framework, ensuring that promoting equality of access for all is integral to the National Transport Strategy.
- Work with Social Security Scotland to:
  - Incorporate disabled people's equality into the Social Security Charter - which is publishing in the coming weeks - enshrining the principles of equality and non-discrimination as outlined in the Social Security (Scotland) Act;
  - Develop guidance for the agency's advisors to ensure that, in addition to supporting access to the benefits it administers, they are able to signpost disabled people to employability services, when appropriate and the individual wants support.
- Develop a national programme of work, commencing in 2019, in collaboration with partners including people with lived experience of social care, to support local reform of adult social care. Having the right social care support is fundamental to being able to participate in society in a full and meaningful way. We will work to ensure that our social care system delivers the right type and mix of support to help remove the range of barriers to work for disabled people.

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND TRANSITIONS

*All disabled young people  
who want to work, can*



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

**All young people transition from school and at that time may enter further or higher education, training or employment. It is a critical time for any young person. Most make that transition successfully, but some do not and we know that for this group, including many disabled young people, the absence of the right interventions at the right time can affect their life chances for years to come.**

In the context of the labour market, young people are defined as those aged 16-24 years. However Scottish Government provision recognises that, for some disadvantaged groups, there is a need to extend support up to the age of 29. In this plan, young people may include those still at school and starting the process of transition. Disabled 16-24 year olds: have the second lowest employment rate (43.2%) of any age group and the highest unemployment rate (20.8%); and are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than non-disabled 16-24 year olds.

Some disabled young people report positive experiences in relation to the support they receive. However, from our engagement events throughout 2017/18, we heard from young people, parents, disabled people's organisations, and service providers, that the quality of guidance and support is not consistent and is preventing some young people from fulfilling their potential.

The [Seven Principles of Good Transition](#) provide a framework to inform, structure and encourage the continual improvement of support for young people with additional needs between the ages of 14 and 25 who are making the transition to young adult life. Applied consistently, they could transform the lives of disabled young people and their parents and carers.

Improving labour market outcomes for disabled young people could have a significant impact on reducing the disability employment gap. If young disabled people in Scotland aged 16-24 were equally as likely to be in work as non-disabled 16-24 year olds, this would achieve 10% of the employment increase required to halve the disability employment gap.



## CASE STUDY: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT NATIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

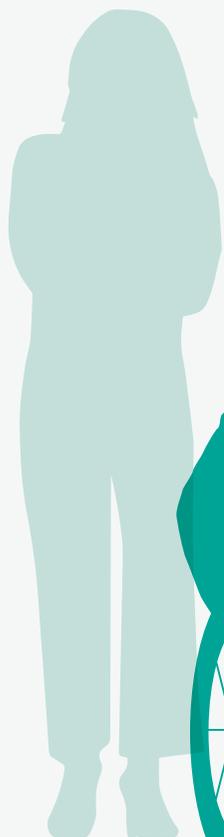
**Inclusion Scotland has placed 48 interns in the public, private and voluntary sectors through the Scottish Government national internship programme, *We Can Work*. This includes 12 interns hosted by the Scottish Government itself.**

Intern roles are varied, enabling disabled people to gain meaningful paid work experience, and employers to learn more about being inclusive at each stage of employment, from recruitment to in work support and development.

One intern who was employed by Glasgow Clyde College used their lived experience to increase inclusivity and awareness of support available to disabled staff members. The intern developed a staff network, and gathered case studies including one profiling the Principal of the college who is dyslexic. This is one example of how empowering disabled people in your workplace can lead to

positive cultural change. The employer said: *“Having the intern make these connections with staff, using their lived experience in a genuine and relatable way, was crucial to the success of this work. Staff felt that they didn’t have disabled role models, and the case studies we are sharing will increase the visibility of disabled people in our workplace”.*

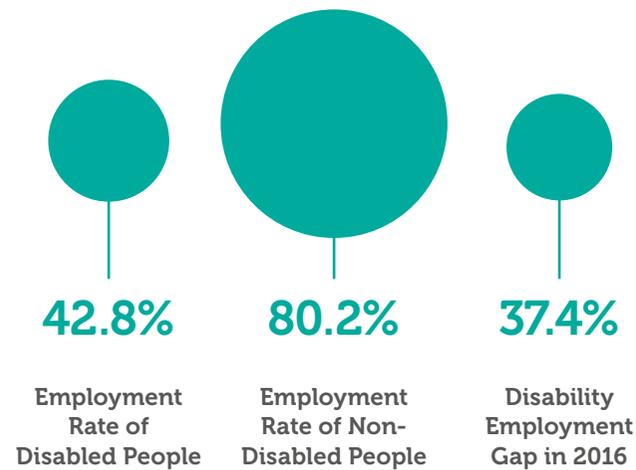
Another intern was placed in the private sector as part of a new project being developed to expand the internship programme. The intern had a successful placement with the corporate IT solutions company Sopra Steria. They were given on the job training, and simple adjustments were made by the employer to make sure the intern was given the best possible start in work. They have secured employment beyond the internship period, and their line manager hopes to help them develop a longer term career in the company.





## A SNAPSHOT OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND

In 2016, The Scottish Government committed to at least halving the disability employment gap by 2038.



Some studies suggest that it could take up to 200 years to half the gap.

We have committed to halving the gap within the next 20 years.



### DISABILITY AFFECTS MANY OF US:

- 1/5 Scots identify as disabled.
- More than a quarter of working age people acquire an impairment.
- Average age of acquiring an impairment is 57.
- Children in families where someone is disabled are more likely to experience poverty.

### HALVING THE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT GAP COULD...

- Increase Scotland's economic output (GDP) by 3.5% in real terms.
- Contribute to the Scottish Government's aim of Inclusive Growth.
- Reduce inequalities in our labour market and society.
- Increase the number of disabled people in work by 130,000.
- Reduce child poverty.
- Improve diversity in our workplaces.
- Reduce regional and sector specific skills gaps.



### WHAT YOU TOLD US:

In discussions with young people, their parents and representatives, you told us that you would like:

- Greater consistency of support and transition planning for all disabled young people.
- Transition planning in schools to start earlier.
- Increased availability of specialist advice and support that addresses the specific needs of disabled young people leaving school and moving into education, training or employment.
- Greater awareness among those supporting disabled young people of the wider range of employability options beyond college and university.
- Provision of more effective and relevant work experience opportunities.
- Guidance for young disabled people and their parents/carers around discussing their support needs with service providers and employers.
- Greater engagement with parents, carers and education providers to enhance the career aspirations of disabled young people.



### ACTION THAT WILL BE TAKEN:

On transitions from school, we will:

- Build on the [Seven Principles of Good Transitions](#), and broader recommendations received from sector experts, disabled young people and their families and carers, and work across government to improve transitions into education, learning and work for disabled young people. This will include considering how we can extend the current public sector internship scheme to see greater use by the private sector.
- In partnership with disabled young people, the Disabled Children and Young People Advisory Group and disabled people's organisations, we will develop employability-specific recommendations setting out how better learning, training and work outcomes can be achieved by disabled young people. Delivered before the end of 2019, these will be aligned to broader action to improve all aspects of transition within education and from education to employment, emerging from Developing the Young Workforce and the Learner Journey Review recommendations.

- Ensure that work being progressed now through the implementation of the Learner Journey Review - to raise aspirations, improve support and broaden the offer for all young people - has a focus on the most vulnerable groups, including disabled young people.
- Work with Education Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Local Government and Skills Development Scotland to build on the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) programme's approach to improve outcomes for disabled young people towards the target to equalise employment rates between disabled and non-disabled young people. This will include:
  - providing enhanced careers information advice and guidance;
  - increasing Modern Apprenticeship participation including by working with employers and those organisations supporting disabled people to access training or work;
  - supporting the DYW Regional Groups to develop actions to support the recruitment of disabled young people; and
  - initiating a practice and improvement evaluation of the equality outcomes in Developing the Young Workforce. Early findings to support policy and delivery improvement will be available from Summer 2019.

**On careers information, advice and guidance, we will:**
- Launch a new Careers Strategy in 2019 to align career information, advice and guidance services in Scotland. Enhancing our lifelong careers service, which is responsive to labour market change and user needs, including those of young disabled people making their first steps into the world of work.
- Work with Skills Development Scotland to:
  - better promote and communicate career options through their activity targeting those with protected equality characteristics, including disabled young people;
  - maximise opportunities to engage with parents/carers, face to face and online, to provide the information they need to: raise aspirations through improved understanding of the breadth of available training, education and employment opportunities; and to support their young disabled people to access these;
  - improve engagement with partners, including schools and parents, to increase understanding of what works in building resilience and aspiration among disabled young people.

**To ensure disabled young people's voices inform the delivery of college programmes, we will:**

- Contribute to the work of the Disabled Students Outcomes Group. Set up by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Lead Scotland, the group will make recommendations on an ongoing basis aimed at achieving parity of outcomes, compared to their peers, for disabled students in Further and Higher Education. The group will directly influence and advise on SFC Local Outcome Agreement guidance and reporting in relation to Disabled Students.

**To improve employment support services and access to employment-related funding support, we will:**

- Following the [review of employability services](#), implement a new flexible and responsive employability delivery model, including more effective employment support for young disabled people.
- Undertake a review in 2019 of Supported Employment provision across Scotland, as part of implementing the employment actions agreed in Scotland's forthcoming Learning Disability Strategy, *Keys to Life*.
- Take action to ensure the consistent collection of data to capture the participation of people with learning disabilities in Scottish Government funded employment programmes.
- Consult on proposals for the Scottish Government's new Job Grant to help support young people aged 16 -24, and ensure access for as many disabled young people as possible.
- Help to promote Independent Living Fund (ILF) Scotland's Transition Fund, through education and employability providers, to ensure disabled young people are aware of and encouraged to access support to enhance their independent living, including access to employment.

# MEASURING PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS



The disability employment gap in Scotland is similar to that at a UK level and, based upon the current rate of change, it has been estimated it could take 200 years to halve the UK gap<sup>11</sup>. Clearly progress has been too slow and we believe it is time to be much more proactive.

We aim to at least halve the disability employment gap by 2038, with milestones set along the way. To measure our progress in reducing the disability employment gap we will monitor and report annually on changes to labour market outcomes for disabled people. Although the employment rate of disabled people is the best indicator of overall progress, in line with our labour market strategy and principles of fair work, we want to develop a more rounded measure of success. We want disabled people to work in meaningful jobs that enable professional development and career progression.

Using the best available data, we will therefore measure progress in line with the 3 key themes of this plan, including monitoring and reporting on the:

- Employment rate of disabled people aged 16-24;
- Type of occupations disabled people move into;
- Pay levels of disabled people;
- Changes in how employers are recruiting disabled people;
- Changes in how disabled people move in and out of employment.

We will publish and regularly update this information.

To achieve our ambition, the employment rate of disabled people will need to increase by at least 1 percentage point every year, and we will undertake a structured review of activity at key milestones to review progress and identify any need for a change to our approach:

- By 2023 we want to increase the employment rate of disabled people to 50%;
- By 2030, we aim to achieve an employment rate of disabled people of 60%.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Work-and-Health\\_Halving\\_the\\_Gap\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Work-and-Health_Halving_the_Gap_FINAL_1.pdf)

Meeting our ambition will require achieving an employment rate for disabled people that far surpasses anything they have ever experienced in our labour market. We will also require a significant reduction in the inactivity rate of disabled people. This will require a concerted effort by employers across the public and private sectors and also wider societal change. But anything less is depriving disabled people of their right to lead fulfilled and independent lives.

We began this journey in 2016 with the publication of *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People*, and have already seen the disability employment gap begin to close. We are aware of the scale of the challenge required but continuing as we are is not an option. We believe the disability employment gap to be driven by inequality and long-standing disadvantage. We cannot rely on market forces to improve labour market outcomes for disabled people – it requires collective action.

In continuing to develop the plan and extend the action to be taken, not only by the Scottish Government, but across sectors and employers in the coming years, we commit to the following:

- Establishing a Scottish Government Delivery Programme Board to oversee implementation of the plan;
- Establishing a Leadership Action Group (co-chaired by disabled people's organisations and employers) to extend the influence and drive the development of further action across the private, third, and public sectors;
- Undertaking further engagement with disabled people and wider stakeholders to inform our approach;
- Launching a website by Spring 2019, which will host the most up to date information on:
  - The wider policy context and best practice information;
  - Action being undertaken by Scottish Government and partners to contribute to achieving the ambition to at least halve the disability employment gap;
  - Annual progress updates towards achieving this ambition.



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