

# Report of the Newham Peer Review: Access to Employment for Disabled Adults

February 2008



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# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Pat Stack for volunteering his time to chair BTPG in Newham. His energy and enthusiasm was contagious and set the perfect tone for the two day event.

Thank you also to Ali Safder and Celia Minoughan for their help organising the event.

Finally, thank you to all the Newham participants who volunteered their time and knowledge to Bridging the Policy Gap.

## **Sally Mackenzie**

National Co-ordinator  
Bridging the Policy Gap

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BTPG	Bridging the Policy Gap
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HNC	Higher National Certificate
NAP	National Action Plan
NEET	Not in employment, education, or training
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OMC	Open Method of Co-ordination
SPTF	Social Policy Task Force

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# Overview of Day One

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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This report is the summary of a two-day event held in Newham on the 25 & 26 September, 2007. The event brought together around 70 participants from government organisations, non-government organisations and people from the community. It was held in The West Ham Football Club in Newham. The purpose of the event was to consider the current provision of services designed to help disabled people in Newham return to sustainable employment. The Peer Review set out to understand whether service provision of this type is helping disabled people. The event also tried to understand what the successful aspects of these services were and how they were helping to reduce poverty and social exclusion for the people of Newham; and whether these lessons could be transferred to other policies trying to eradicate poverty in the UK.

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## 1.2 WELCOME AND ADMINISTRATION

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### **Pat Stack, Chair person**

Pat welcomed the group and emphasised the desire for all disabled people to have choice, independence and control in their lives. He stated that until recently, many disabled people felt that they weren't valued at all. This has started to change, due in part to recent equality legislation but there is still some way to go to achieve full equality for disabled people. He stated that he hoped this project would help in working towards independence for disabled people.

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## 1.3 WELCOME ADDRESS

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### **Deputy Mayor Christine Bowden, London Borough of Newham**

The Deputy Mayor welcomed participants and pointed out how important it was for people with disabilities to feed their own experiences into the policy process in order to make the policy successful. We need to make sure that policies line up for people rather than policy-makers.

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## 1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

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### **Sally Mackenzie, Bridging the Policy Gap, National Co-ordinator**

The project is being funded by the European Commission to raise awareness about the social inclusion and social protection activities of the European Union. More importantly, the funding is designed to engage more people in that work.

This is the second of three Peer Reviews. The first was held in Swansea and the third will be held in Glasgow. In each place we will be looking at different policies that try to reduce poverty and social exclusion, but each in very different ways. This process should raise awareness about European processes, but we also want to improve the policies that we are reviewing, and understand what is working well and whether there are lessons from the implementation of this policy that could be used to improve policies targeting poverty elsewhere in Britain.



Most of the people at the Peer Review were local with local knowledge and local experience. They came from government and community groups as well as people with experience of poverty or exclusion whose lives and those of their children, are impacted by disability. This group was joined by the Reference Group: 15 people from the *Bridging the Policy Gap Partnership*, which includes representatives from local, devolved and central governments as well as voluntary organisations, academics, and people with personal experience of poverty or exclusion from across the country. We knew from the preparation meetings held in the lead up to the peer review that there are many issues around accessing employment for disabled people and we hope that the unique mix of knowledge and expertise assembled in this room will help resolve some of these issues.

The project hopes to demonstrate the value that this method of participation can add to the policy process of local government.

## 1.5 INTRODUCTION OF THE REFERENCE GROUP

**Peter Kelly, Director of The Poverty Alliance**

This project was the result of 5 – 6 years work encouraging public participation in policy making. It was part of a larger process of trying to learn how different regions are using different policies to tackle poverty across the UK. He explained that we were there to act as a “constructive friend” to the policy and asked people to openly engage in dialogue and leave behind their organisational roles.

## 1.6 THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

**Chris Burston, Social Inclusion Unit, Department for Work and Pensions**

Following these introductions a presentation was given about the National Action Plan. It was explained that the National Action Plan on Social on Social Inclusion (NAP) is part of a wider European framework known as the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC), which enables Europe to share best practice in the area of social inclusion and social protection. This framework was created by the European Commission as a way of co-ordinating member state activity on social issues such as disability, benefits, education, and child poverty.

Government is committed to working with disabled people to tackle behaviour which is discriminatory, and to understand how disabled people can live independently.

Chris emphasised that the lessons from ‘Bridging the Policy Gap’ will be fed into the writing of the new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion that is due to be written in 2008.

In response to this presentation, one participant spoke about her own experience of being a single mother with a disability. She has one teenage son and had lost another son to murder when he was 20 years old. Her income was benefits of up to £125 per week. She spoke forcefully about the struggle she has living on such a low income: she owned one pair of shoes; she has to refuse her son if he asked for £1 because she needs the money to pay the bills. She spoke of being ‘forever in debt for the Internet’ because her son was doing his GCSEs and he needed the Internet otherwise his education will go backwards. She would like to return to work but she doesn’t know how her condition will be from one day to the next, she needed a guarantee that she could go back to benefits if she couldn’t commit to full time work. She finished by expressing her concern about whether conferences like this one will make much difference in her life if there is no money to help her.



Another disabled person, and parent to disabled children said that Newham had a policy for the inclusion of children but she thought there were no resources to back it up. Transition to adulthood was very difficult for children as there was no aspiration for them at the local level.

Chris responded by saying that he had worked for many years with lone parents and disabled people struggling to exist on benefits. He understood that it was not easy to keep a family on income support. This was why the Government had put substantial sums of money into increasing benefits and tax credits for children. It was also why we were trying to help parents find jobs that would offer a sustainable route out of poverty. As ever, there were limits to the amount of money Government could devote to increasing benefits and to supporting local and national projects aimed at supporting disabled adults and children. The National Action Plan did not have a commissioning budget and was not able to give money for such projects. However, it could draw attention to what works and help make the case for funding to people and organisations who did have budgets that could cover the costs.

## 1.7 THE STORIES

Two of the people who attended the Preparation Meetings offered to share their own experiences with the audience.

### 1.7.1 Imran Ali

Imran was diagnosed with Deep Venous Insufficiency. At first, he didn't think that this would impact on his life but he quickly realised the impact it would have. His job at the time was an administrative job, which required a lot of walking. His condition made this impossible so he had to resign. One of the consequences of this was that he had now left a job due to 'health problems' and would have to disclose this to future prospective employers. He took another job but decided to return to study in the hope it would improve his chances of a career. Towards the end of his degree he took a job with a disability charity. Because he couldn't walk or wait for buses he had to catch a lot of taxis in order to fulfill the home visit element of his job. Whilst in this job, gaining access to taxis proved difficult, and reimbursement of fares also proved problematic. Currently he is working for Newham Council in the Home Improvement Agency, which allows flexible working that helps him to manage his condition.

Employers need to understand that flexible and understanding working conditions mean more than providing a chair. Imran felt that disabled people need to impress employers with their individual skills. It's also very important to be clear with employers about what you can and can't do. Finally, Imran felt that getting jobs was easy; it was maintaining them that was the difficult bit.

### 1.7.2 Maxine Irving's Story read by Angus Mckenzie-Davie

This is a transcript of Maxine's Story:

I became physically disabled in 1994 and spent several years unable to work. During that time I became a Service User of the Greenhill Centre (a day centre for physically disabled and sensory impaired adults) and as I became better - and more accustomed to my disability - I began taking an active role in the Centre. After a couple of years I felt the need to broaden my horizons, and I left the Centre. Initially I was happy doing some voluntary work, helping friends with their businesses etc. I did not really think about paid work because there seemed to be so many barriers. What work could I do? Who would employ me? How would I get there? Would I be financially worse off? What would happen if I discovered after a few months that I could not keep it up? It did not seem possible – or practical.



The post of Administrative Assistant became open at The Greenhill Centre and I was invited to apply, but I was unsure because of the reasons above. The manager of the Centre put me in touch with The Shaw Trust, who helped to get me on to Access to Work, advised how to obtain Benefit Protection so that my Housing Benefit would be protected for 12 months in case I found myself unable to maintain the job, and gave me a grant to assist with the expenses of returning to work. They were also available for support, advice and assistance after I had returned to work. I was unaware of the existence of such schemes, and I know that they are still not widely known – even 5 years later. I was lucky that I knew someone who knew about The Shaw Trust who knew all about them. Others are not as fortunate.

My case is an all too rare success story and I am aware that many more people have very different stories – often involving the work being offered unsuitable or unacceptable. The process of applying for the Access to Work and the Benefit Protection took several weeks, and although I was fortunate enough to have a very understanding boss, perhaps not all employers would be so forgiving! These schemes – and others like them - are far from perfect, and need to be more clearly sign-posted and quicker and easier to access.

Returning to work – for me personally – has been made a relatively painless experience by the support I have had, and has been so rewarding in so many ways. For others it is an ongoing, traumatic and sometimes fruitless task. I hope we will even the playing field eventually.

## 1.8 PRESENTATIONS ABOUT POLICY UNDER REVIEW

### 1.8.1 Overview of Government Welfare to Work Policies

#### **Chris Burston, Social Inclusion Unit, Department for Work and Pensions**

Chris gave an overview of the UK Government's approach to welfare reform and highlighted some of the key changes that had been introduced over the last 10 years. The Labour Government introduced the 'New Deal' approach to welfare that can be summarized as: 'Work for those who can, support for those who cannot'. New Deal for Disabled People was one of many New Deal schemes introduced for target groups of benefit claimants. New Deal was a move towards putting benefits and jobs together.

However, since the introduction of the New Deal the government has begun to recognize that the barriers faced by a disabled person wanting to get back to work are complex and very personal. They face even more barriers if they live in Newham, the third most deprived borough in the country with above average levels of worklessness. In response to this, the Government has created 'Pathways to Work'; which is intended to provide a more personalised level of service to its clients.

### 1.8.2 Overview of Routes into Employment for Disabled People in Newham

#### **Celia Minoughan, Social Regeneration Unit, London Borough of Newham**

The Department for Work and Pensions is the major provider of services to disabled people in employment in Newham. They deliver predominantly through Jobcentre Plus and, as from 3 December 2007, through the private contractor 'Work Directions' who will be delivering



the Pathways to Work program for East London and City Area. These are services that are not within the Council's control but Newham has a key partnership role to play to ensure that services meet the needs of disabled people in Newham.

The borough of Newham has very high levels of disabled people and amongst this group, a lower than average employment rate for disabled people. The Council has recently commissioned a review to consider how best to address the barriers faced by disabled people looking to gain and sustain employment in Newham.

This event is about incorporating the participants' views into practical ideas for improving the services in Newham that try to help disabled people find and sustain employment.

### 1.8.3 Pathways to Work in East London

#### **Jon Adams, Work Directions**

Pathways to Work will require anyone making a claim for incapacity benefits after December 2007 to be automatically referred to Work Directions. They will have to participate in a 'mandatory work-focused interview' with Work Directions staff. The interview is not about forcing people to work where it will impact health adversely. The point is to address the lack of information and support for disabled people who want to return to work and enable them to have a discussion about what they need to achieve that. They will receive help and advice about confidence levels, financial issues (benefits, tax credits, debt advice), and condition management with most services being offered in-house.

In response to questions about the compulsory element of Pathways and the business model that it is premised on, the speaker said that there was a need to explain to people the benefit of work and the support available. There was no compulsion from Work Directions for a disabled person to take a job. He added that the mandatory nature of the interview was a good way of ensuring people got given the information they needed to make their own decisions about work. With regards to their contract with the government, the target figure is to get 45% of clients into employment and 25% in work 6 months later. The company can only achieve these targets if clients feel that they are being supported. They will not achieve the sustainability targets if they put people in the wrong jobs.

One participant asked where the government's commitment to the social model of disability was. For her, this seemed to focus on the medical model. She felt that a 6-month sustainability target was too short for a disabled person, who might need support for several years, as with Ellingham Employment Services who specialize in placing people with learning disabilities into jobs for 16 hours plus per week, 20% of the clients they support have been in employment more than 7 years.

In response, the speaker said that 6 months is only the point at which they measure to. It doesn't mean we withdraw support and frequently work with people beyond that point.

## 1.9 CLOSING ADDRESS

#### **Pat Stack, Chairperson**

Pat thanked everyone for their active participation in today's meeting and closed the meeting for the day.

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# Overview of Day Two

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## EXPLANATION OF THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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The discussion questions for the Peer Review were created as the result of the two workshops with service users that took place before this event. The questions reflect the many issues that were raised in those workshops.

During the workshops there were four recurring words that people used when discussing how to overcome the barriers that exist for disabled people wanting to enter employment:

- Flexibility;
- Accessibility;
- Aspirations; and
- Support

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## 2 DISCUSSION QUESTION ONE

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What should employers do and what should they be required (by law) to do to help disabled people into employment? What help should be available to achieve this?

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### 2.1 Key Findings

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- Legislation and government policy will not make a difference unless people are aware of it. Employers need to understand their duties and know that the government will enforce these where appropriate. Both employers and their potential employees need to know about the support (financial and otherwise) available to them when employing disabled people. Communication needs to be a core component of the implementation of all government policies.
- Compulsion by legislation was viewed as undesirable by many of the service providers present. They preferred to work with employers who understood the value of employing disabled people and were committed to integrating disabled people in to their workforce. For employment to be sustainable for anyone, the working environment has to be rewarding and enjoyable. Forcing an employer to take on a disabled person will only lead to unsustainable work environments that will result in lasting damage to the attitudes of employer and employee alike.
- The biggest barrier of all was the attitudes of the general public, employers and employees. A sea change in attitude was required before disabled people could expect open access to the job market.
- Negative media coverage of people suffering mental health issues is one of the biggest barriers to moving attitudes of employers and the public forward. One negative headline can ruin any small progress from legislation and government policy overnight.



- Accessibility goes well beyond the issue of physical access. Accessibility considerations should begin with the job application process and continue after the disabled person is settled in to their new job. Participants suggested that employers could think more creatively about how disabled people can best participate in the job application process. For some disabled people this may mean using different kinds of application processes. One practice that has worked well is the employment of ‘working interviews’<sup>1</sup> or the use of advocates within the interview situation. The overall aim of changes to the application process is to provide a level playing field for disabled applicants.
- Disability Awareness Training has a role to play in breaking down barriers in both the public and private sectors but it will only make an impact if:
  - **senior and middle managers undertake the training;**
  - **it employs ‘direct encounters’ with disabled people; and**
  - **is put in to practice regularly.**
- Public sector must lead by example and use positive experiences to market the benefits of employing disabled people to other more reluctant, employers.
- Flexible working conditions are crucial for disabled people to participate successfully in the labour market.

## 2.2 Examples of employers in Newham

- London Borough of Newham – particularly the Job Carving exercise
- Tesco
- Sainsbury’s
- Newco
- Action and Rights of Disabled People in Newham
- Greenhill Centre, London Borough of Newham
- Morrisons
- Marks and Spencer
- Shaw Trust
- Stratford Advice Arcade
- Homebase, Leyton

All of the above were listed as good examples but many participants had negative stories about some of these organisations. Practices could differ widely between divisions, stores and even from one manager to the next. Employers must therefore do more to monitor the implementation of their own schemes to ensure disabled people have a place in their workforce.

1. A working interview is a short placement of a week or so within the company that allows a person to demonstrate their skills and be assessed against the selection criteria by the employer. It may also be extended to allow a potential worker to pick up the necessary skills prior to assessment.



## 2.3 Government Legislation and Policy

People felt the Government would be better to focus on awareness raising work for existing policies such as Access to Work and Workstep. Not enough employers know that there is government support available to cover costs of modifications required as the result of employing a disabled person.

**'The process of applying for the Access to Work and the Benefit Protection took several weeks...these schemes – and others like them ...need to be more clearly sign-posted and quicker and easier to access.'**

### **Service User**

Where new policies are being introduced, a well-devised and well-resourced communication plan should be a core component of the implementation plan for that policy.

Service providers also pointed out that the funding of programs such as 'Workstep' has not kept up with inflation so the impact of the initiative decreases year on year.

The introduction of a 'quota' system (requiring companies to ensure that a target percentage of their workforce had a disability) was discussed at most tables. Some favoured the idea but it was viewed as undesirable by many of the service providers present. They preferred to work with employers who understood the value of employing disabled people and were committed to integrating disabled people in to their workforce. For employment to be sustainable for anyone, the working environment has to be rewarding and enjoyable. Forcing an employer to take on a disabled person will only lead to unsustainable work environments that will result in lasting damage to the attitudes of employer and employee alike.

**'If you have to force an employer to take disabled people on then it will not be a successful relationship.'**

### **Service Provider**

Monitoring of current statutory duties was also considered important. People were keen to see more active monitoring of the Disability Equality Scheme. Many people felt that transport in particular was failing under this duty. Bus travel, a critical form of transport for disabled people in Newham, was singled out as being particularly bad, although the London Tube System also remains virtually unusable for most disabled people. People wanted disabled inspectors to test whether public services are being delivered in line with the Disability Equality Duty.

Transport on the whole remains a massive barrier to disabled people accessing employment. Disabled people in Newham live in one of the world's largest metropolitan areas, offering an extraordinary variety of jobs and careers. But for most, the simple task of getting to work prevents them from committing to a job. One participant wanted to work in Euston but couldn't get there without catching a taxi everyday, he found this frustrating and a major barrier preventing him from living the life he wanted:

**"I don't want to stay in Stratford my whole life. Why should I?"**

### **Service User**



## 2.4 Public Attitudes

**'Employers don't need pushing, they need shoving'**

### **Service Provider**

Targeting individual employers was a large part of what all service providers did. There was a need to sell the benefits of employing disabled people but also to advise employers of the support and funding available for modifications that may be needed. They also point out to the employer that some adjustments made for a disabled member of staff can have broader benefits:

**'(We) put a client in with a private sector information technology company; our client had poor literacy and numeracy skills, and was struggling with some of the processes. So the employer colour coded everything and then noticed the rest of the workforce were following this, productivity went up significantly so he was able to take on more people and he preferred to take on people with disabilities. Then the non-disabled people on workforce ...broke down all the prejudices and now they're such an inclusive company.'**

### **Service Provider**

However, whilst individual targeting is important, there are broader issues that need to be dealt with:

**We held an event for employers where we had a confidential box for people to write down any fears they had about employing Disabled People. We thought we'd get questions about employment law, aids and adaptations. One of the questions was actually: 'How do I talk to a person with a disability?' When you have to address that level of misunderstanding in society, it doesn't matter what law you put in place, it's education that you have to put in place.**

### **Service Provider**

Attitudes to disability in the workplace cannot be isolated from their social context. Disability discrimination is clearly a general social issue and participants were very concerned about the negative attitudes of wider society to people with disability. It was felt that tackling discrimination at the level of individual employers would not deal with the complex nature of workplace discrimination. Formal policies in organizations have been shown in many research studies to produce formal responses and procedures by employees and managers, but such cultures of formal accountability often only serve to mask substantive problems that remain in the routine practices of the workforce. Corporate policies denouncing discrimination may have little impact where an individual manager or their staff does not wish to work with disabled people because they view them as an inconvenience.



**'We are working with Tesco where one manager was quite understanding but then a new manager started and doesn't understand and is making it difficult for the clients that are already there - need to keep in touch and remind them what needs to happen.'**

#### **Service User**

Contributing factors to society's poor attitude to disabled people included negative media portrayals of people with disability and a visible lack of disabled role models in day-to-day life.

Under-representation of disabled people in day-to-day life has resulted in people struggling to understand disabled people and fearing interaction with disability in life and at work. Participants felt that simply having disability as a more visible part of society would go a long way to correcting these attitudes. Another positive spin off from seeing more disabled people in positions such as teachers, doctors, or nurses would be to improve the aspirations of young disabled people in Newham who are sadly lacking in role models.

The impact of the media on mental health policy was clearly illustrated by a service provider:

**'(It) doesn't matter how many policies or laws there are or how much hard work the DWP does; it all becomes irrelevant when Sun headlines with 'Mad Person Axe Murders Mother'...Then we go to an employer and say: 'we've got someone with a mental health problem' ... then we're finished, and we're finished because of the headline the day before, not because of any laws or policies.'**

#### **Service Provider**

Participants suggested a more proactive approach to media could help positively influence popular opinion. People wanted to see documentaries on television talking about disability, explaining how it impacts your life and that of your family. Public awareness campaigns were also mentioned as a potential tool for shifting public attitudes an example of good practice cited was the Scottish 'See Me' campaign which raised awareness about mental health.

## 2.5 Public Sector

The public sector needs to lead by example in this area. Not only so it can legitimately and effectively market the benefits of employing disabled people to other employers in the borough but also because the public sector is one of the largest employers in Newham.

There was a lot of good practice locally with most public sector employers accredited under the Two Ticks scheme, however there were significant omissions. Organisations not registered included: the Olympic Delivery Agency (ODA), the London Development Agency and the Mayor of London's Office. The ODA does operate a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled people however not being Two Ticks registered does seem a significant omission given they will be delivering the Paralympics for which Newham is the host borough.

More could be done to use large public sector procurement contracts (e.g. to deliver the Olympic developments) to ensure that employers are positive about the employment of disabled people. The wider issue here concerns the use of schemes such as Two Ticks to help overcome disadvantage and reduce discrimination against disabled people. There is potential for the use of such approaches to be integrated into public sector procurement contracts, making it a condition for those contracting to carry out public services to at least be registered

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under the Two Ticks Scheme. Such an approach would have the potential to encourage all organisations that were accessing public funds to address issues of disability within their organisation.

There should also be more robust monitoring of the public sector, particularly the number of disabled people they employ. More evidence is required that the Two Ticks scheme, the DDA and other legislation and programs are making a difference.

## 2.6 Accessibility

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Whilst physical accessibility is still a major barrier preventing disabled people from applying for many positions, accessibility should not be limited to installing ramps for wheelchair users.

Employers can only employ disabled people if they apply for vacancies. More needs to be done to address the concerns that disabled people may face when considering whether to enter employment. An example of good practice in how to address this was suggested as providing 'job tasters' for disabled people – to enable them to try out different jobs, see which suited them best, and to enable their fears (perhaps around the support that will be available) to be addressed.

**'We've had good experiences of ... work trials to prove to an employer that, although a person may not have the right paper qualifications, which is a big issue with learning disabilities, they can still do the job. Over 50% of our paid employment (and we specialise in putting people in over 16 hours per week in open employment) begins with work trials. Then we will...select a mentor from amongst the staff and that also breaks down a lot of prejudices.'**

### **Service Provider**

Whilst 'work trials' and 'job testers' are an important tool in getting people into work, individual cases must be monitored closely to avoid exploitation. One service provider had come across someone who had been working as a 'volunteer' at a well-known supermarket chain for 36 hours per week for 3 years and not received a penny.

Another problem related to accessibility was difficulties with the application process, particularly for people with a learning disability, who can struggle with standard application forms. As a starting point all aspects of the job application process should be made available in a variety of accessible formats. Newham Council had taken further steps to 'level the playing field' for disabled people during the application process. One example of good practice was to set-up 'working interviews' for disabled people who struggled with the standard forms. Other alternatives can include the use of computers, interpreters or advocates during interviews.

There was a need to raise awareness of learning disability among employers, managers and Human Resources teams. Something as small as making sure the interviewer knows that the person can understand what is being asked but needs more time to think about his or her answer could improve a person's chances of getting the job. People with a learning disability are not a homogeneous group and more needs to be done to break down assumptions about what people can/cannot do, and to make clear what support is available to employers/line managers to support their employment.



## 2.7 Flexibility

'A guy wanted to find a job working in B&Q or Homebase. Robert's quite poorly sometimes, but Homebase said bring him along and we'll have a chat to him and give him a three-week work trial. We agreed to come in every day to support him, we'll see how he gets on, if he's fabulous we'll do him a reference or offer him a job or whatever. My first instinct was to think this sounds like free labour, but Robert was very keen to go. He's on his third week now, he had a bad couple of hours, they phoned us up when he wasn't well and we went along within half an hour and spoke with him and the management. They've been really good, and that's the flexibility we need when we're dealing with mental health. An organisation that's prepared to go that little bit further for their staff. That's what we would look for.'

### Service Provider

Flexibility in the workplace was viewed as crucial for a job to be sustainable. No two disabled people are the same, and their needs will be different and will change from day to day depending on their condition. The only way to deal with this is to have flexible working practices, in this way an employer can allow their employee the independence and control they need to manage their life.

Flexibility might mean introducing family-friendly working practices to enable the parent of a disabled child to balance their home responsibilities with their work. This is one of many policies that may be implemented to help a disabled employee remain in employment, but would in fact have broader benefits for the whole workforce.

The 'job carving' scheme initiated by Newham Council HR Department (to enable the employment of a person with a learning disability) was cited as an example of good practice. It was felt to be an effective way of creating jobs that utilised a disabled person's strengths, while minimising the impact of their disability of their ability to do a job.

Job sharing was another example:

'You may have two disabled people whose skills are complementary so between them they can achieve more. For example, you've got someone whose good at one aspect like administration and someone else whose good at practical side of thing, maybe communication.'

### Service User



## 2.8 Recommendations

### 2.8.1 *The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*

Many of the public sector bodies in Newham have been Two Ticks accredited. Notably missing from the scheme are both the Olympic Delivery Authority and The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games. These organisations are responsible for delivering the Olympics and the Paralympics, for which Newham is the host Borough. This seems like a significant missed opportunity for disabled population in the borough, many of whom would relish the opportunity to work towards the staging of the Paralympics.

### 2.8.2 *Public Procurement*

Public sector procurement contracts should require successful contractors to be registered under the Two Ticks scheme.

### 2.8.3 *Communication key to successful policy implementation*

Where new policies are being introduced, a well-devised and well-resourced communication plan should be a core component of the implementation plan for that policy.

### 2.8.4 *Effective monitoring*

All government policies should be effectively monitored, including the Disability Equality Scheme. Disabled people felt that a 'mystery shopper' approach to monitoring could be added to the monitoring process as an additional tool for assessing whether an organisation is meeting its obligations to help disabled people find employment. Disabled people wanted to be able to report non-compliance with the legislation and see this followed up with action.

### 2.8.5 *Accessibility*

Accessibility is a much broader issue than physical access. Accessibility considerations begin with the job application and continue even after the disabled person is settled in to their new job. Employers need to think creatively about how disabled people can best participate in the job application process.

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## 3 DISCUSSION QUESTION TWO:

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What should be put in place to help disabled people develop careers rather than just 'get a job'?

### 3.1 Key Findings

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- Short-term targets create a short-term focus amongst service providers who concentrate on getting disabled people into jobs rather than careers.
- Low aspiration is a major barrier preventing disabled people from considering having a 'career'. Aspiration of individual disabled people is an issue but we also need to address levels of aspiration of those who care and provide services for disabled people, this includes: parents, carers, teachers, health services, careers advisors, and employers, as well as service providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors especially those providing employment services to the disabled people.
- The education system does not adequately prepare disabled people for having careers.
- Disabled people in employment need support both to manage their employment but also to help their progression up the career ladder.

### 3.2 Short-termism

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People viewed the short-term funding and targets of service providers as detrimental to disabled people who want meaningful, rewarding careers. Disabled people feel the current 'into work' system fails to treat them as individuals and doesn't recognise the wide variety of conditions, aspirations, qualifications and experience of disabled people. The system tends to cater for disabled people who will be satisfied with a routine job even if the earnings are low but others who want, and feel equipped for, something more demanding with greater rewards are not encouraged in these ambitions.

Examples of the short-term view taken by government and its service providers include:

- Government set targets for Pathways to Work that define 'sustainable' as 6 months employment.
- Clients being guided by Jobcentre Plus are allowed 6 months to find the job they want, after that they come under pressure to take any job.
- Limited or no support for disabled people to seek academic qualifications that can take several years to achieve.



Disabled participants felt under pressure to take jobs that they weren't happy with and didn't suit them as individuals. They felt pressure from the people who are meant to support them and help them. Taking a job because of this type of pressure will only result in unsuitable and unsustainable employment. Additionally:

**'...people will never build a career in a job they didn't want in the first place.'**

**Service Provider**

Where people are placed in short term temporary placement this reduces the opportunity for promotion and can also discourage the employer from investing in any training for the individual because it's only a short-term contract. This will again limit the ability of the individual to move up the career ladder.

The Working Tax Credit, whilst generally perceived to be a positive tool for getting people back to work, was criticised for taking a short-term approach that was viewed by some as a discouragement to career development. Whilst the Tax Credit was viewed positively as a tool for encouraging people into work, the fact that it reduced considerably in the second year of being back at work may encourage people to drop out of work rather than stay on and build a career. This might be especially true of those in low-paid, uninspiring jobs where the income was unlikely to increase significantly in the future.

There is also a need to recognise and support the role that volunteering has in helping disabled people into jobs. Currently, the benefit system puts restrictions on the amount of volunteering that a person in receipt of benefits can do. Yet volunteering can be a great way for disabled people to learn new skills, discover what they enjoy and also what they are good at without the pressure of going into a paid work environment.

### 3.3 Aspiration

**'I already have good qualifications but felt pressured to accept a boring dead end job. I would have wasted my qualifications and ended up in uninteresting work just to fit in with the expectations of people who were supposed to be helping me.'**

**Service User**

Participants felt that 'everyone has low expectations of disabled people' and this restricts the type of jobs considered 'appropriate' for a disabled person:

**'People feel pushed into low skilled, low reward jobs because others feel it is all they can do.'**

**Service User**

Aspirations of disabled people themselves are an issue and need to be addressed from a very young age, but so too are the aspirations of their representatives and supporters:

**'...It's about raising aspirations, not just those of the clients but their representatives should (also) consider their career ambitions.'**

**Service User**



Parents of children with disabilities were acutely aware of the low expectations for disabled people in Newham. They felt that more visible role models in the community could help overcome this. Several participants mentioned local celebrity Ade Adepitan, MBE<sup>2</sup> who grew up in Newham as an excellent role model for disabled people in Newham. However parents felt that the best role models would be part of a child's every day life. They would be teachers, nurses and doctors. But the most important role model of all would be a disabled parent. A disabled parent successfully participating in employment or training would be the strongest signal to a child that it is possible to overcome the barriers. What was needed was visible, daily contact with disabled people who had rewarding careers and held positions of authority within the community. This type of role model was important because:

**'... They know the barriers... there are so many barriers as a disabled person, you can feel crushed, so you need to see role models.'**

**Service User**

Some also viewed the tax and benefit system as an example of the low aspirations society has for its disabled people. The system is designed so that there is little advantage to taking a job which pays £15,000 - £20,000 compared with one which pays £10,000 - £15,000 once tax and benefits are accounted for. The 'return to work' credit may make the lower paid job worth more. The system doesn't seem designed to encourage those at the lower end of the income scale to try to increase their earnings.

## 3.4 Client-centred approach to service provision

**'The system should be about empowering disabled people but it sometimes appears to consider everyone else before the disabled person.'**

**Service User**

Participants felt that there was too little focus on what disabled people want. Their interests can often be confused with those of their family, carer or representative. It is vital that service providers recognise that there can be a clash of interests between the disabled people and those who care for, and support them. Disabled people can be discouraged from seeking careers because others don't think it realistic, or are concerned about the difficulties for themselves.

Disabled people need to have more say, more time, and more choices to decide what they want to do for themselves. This can be difficult for a disabled person as one service user pointed out:

**'Disabled people get used to being told what to do. They become reliant and need encouragement to move on.'**

**Service User**

But that is no excuse to allow other people to make their decisions for them. Disabled people need to be treated as the individuals they are and the employment opportunities available to them should take into account their unique set of skills, abilities and aspirations.

2. Ade Adepitan is a television presenter and a member of the wheelchair basketball team that won bronze at the 2004 Athens Summer Paralympics. He is well-known for his role on a BBC One promotional campaign featuring wheelchair dancers. He was made a Member of the British Empire for services to disability sport in 2005 and was part of the delegation to Singapore which secured the Olympics and Paralympics for London in 2012.



## 3.5 In Work Support

More can be done to support people who are already in employment to stay in employment and progress their careers. This applies not only to disabled people continuing their development, but also to play a preventative role helping employees manage their own mental health or helping those who acquire a disability in adulthood to retain their employment.

Government schemes such as Workstep and Access to Work need to be better publicised. Disabled participants were very clear that any special or modified equipment that was required to enable a disabled person to do their job needed to be in place from the first day at work for that person. Not having the equipment in place could be frustrating for the disabled person and could negatively impact their own confidence in their ability to do the job.

Stress management was considered an under-utilised tool for helping all employees. Participants felt that Mental Health was not something that employers took seriously or viewed as their responsibility. One participant felt this was a cultural characteristic and observed the Japanese practice of morning exercise for the whole workforce as a good example of stress management being incorporated into the ethos of the workplace. Stress is a well-known trigger for depression and can also impact physical well being, so it is in the interests of an employer to help workers manage their stress levels. This is recognised by some large employers such as BT who already provide stress management training for all staff and have seen a reduction in sick days as a result. It was suggested by a DWP officer that the Government could encourage businesses to provide stress management training by allowing tax relief for the costs of providing it. This could prove beneficial for the Treasury on the basis of BT's experience which suggests it could result in a reduction of people claiming Incapacity Benefit.

However it was noted by one participant that stress management training could only be effective if undertaken by all levels of management in an organisation:

**'I've been on stress management training, I learnt so much, I came back and recommended it to my manager, but she ignored it. So it was useless for me because I was identifying signs of stress in my colleagues but she just saw them as 'always off sick'. So before anything happens, it has to happen right from the top – people at the top need to know how to work with disabled people.'**

### **Service Provider**

Employees should only be required to work the hours that they are contracted to work for. This is important to help employees manage their work/life balance but crucial for disabled workers if they have a condition that requires constant management.

Training and development opportunities should not stop when the job starts. People wanted access to ongoing, recognised and accessible training to help progress their careers. Access to IT training was particularly lacking. There were a number of training providers but accessibility often prevented disabled people from participating. The Greenhill Centre was offered as a good example of IT provision but their computer facilities are very heavily booked so availability is an issue.



Some disabled people didn't feel that they had a right to a voice in the workplace. Even though this can be an empowering part of employment. Some participants said they didn't feel free to speak their mind because they feared intimidation or being:

**'...classed as a 'trouble-maker' rather than a positive role model just simply because your disabled.'**

#### **Service User**

One recommendation for overcoming this was that every workplace should have a 'Charter of Rights for Disabled People'. The Charter could be a summation of rights in the Disability Discrimination Act that used simple language to make it accessible to all. This would empower disabled people to know their rights and enable them to find their voice. It would also ensure that other employees understood the rights accorded to disabled people. Disabled people could be given the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the charter. This could be incorporated in to the Two Ticks Scheme.

## 3.6 Education

People felt there should be more focus on career prospects and further education when disabled people are at school. People felt that mainstream education increased attainment when properly resourced as compared to special schools which were viewed as holding people back.

Parents of disabled children felt that there is no encouragement or expectation that disabled school-leavers will want to move into further education, and even if they do there is very limited capacity for them to do so.

Apprenticeships are now becoming less common because Remploy, a government funded agency specialising in apprenticeships for people with learning disabilities, is being downsized due to cuts in funding. However, new 14-19 national diplomas and foundation tier of learning which start in Newham in September 2008 may begin to address the issue of disabled young people leaving school/further education with no qualifications. Better work experience opportunities and access to apprenticeships will be offered to accompany new qualifications.

Disabled people want to see an education system which is truly inclusive and does more to help disabled children with their transition into adulthood.



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## 3.7 Recommendations

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- Funding to support disabled people to undertake longer courses of study (including degree level) should form part of any government initiative designed to enable disabled people to return to work.
- Employers should be encouraged to support training for their disabled employees. Services such as the Learning and Skills Council's 'Train to Gain' programme which can help identify the needs of the company and individuals within it.
- Service providers need to put the client at the center of the decision-making process. The needs, abilities and aspirations of the individual should be what determine their employment opportunities not the needs or aspirations of their carers, parents, or teachers.
- The Government should consider providing tax breaks to employers for stress-management training.
- Every workplace should have a 'Charter of Rights for Disabled People'. The Charter could be a summation of rights in the Disability Discrimination Act that could use simple language to make it accessible to all. This would empower disabled people to know their rights and enable them to find their voice but also make sure that other people understood the rights accorded to disabled people. This would be useful in all workplaces, but particularly useful in schools, hospitals and other organisations working with disabled people. This could be incorporated in to the Two Ticks Scheme.
- Further Education providers need to strengthen partnership work with disability organisations to consider how to improve educational opportunities for disabled school-leavers, and tackle the lack of aspirations and lack of opportunity for disabled people moving into adulthood. Further education providers should try to work with disabled organisations run by disabled people who understand the social model of discrimination. These organisations are well placed to understand local issues facing disabled people but also to provide local children with local role models. Ideas suggested from the Peer Review meetings were to introduce young people to positive disabled role models during their Transition Meetings which take place to help young people to think through their options. People felt that introducing high achieving role models should encourage high aspirations in children.



## 4 QUESTION THREE

How do we fill the information gap for disabled people and employers? This includes issues such as:

- Job opportunities;
- Training;
- Access to Work funding;
- In work support etc...

### 4.1 Key Findings

- **Better dissemination, better focus:** There is an overwhelming amount of information available for disabled people from a huge number of different organisations. The information can be difficult to navigate and is often out of date or inaccurate.
- **The natural tendency of agencies engaged in the lives of disabled people to communicate separately with their client groups leads to confusion and has created gaps in people's knowledge about who does what. This becomes more complicated as the Government begins to contract service provision out to the voluntary and private sectors. It is not always clear how these different organisations and sectors interact.**
- **Information tends to be filtered by low expectations. Information available about training and employment opportunities for disabled people tends to focus on a narrow range of jobs which limit the options for disabled people and send a message about society's expectations of what they can achieve.**

### 4.2 Communication Strategy

People wanted better dissemination and a better focus for information. They didn't want screeds of information; they wanted relevant and accurate information in an easily accessible format and received in a timely fashion. They wanted a coherent strategy for communication that engaged all the different agencies involved in their lives.

People wanted to be consulted about changes to their care schedules and they wanted the information in advance so they could prepare for any changes that needed to be made.

One operational detail that resulted in confusion was the fact that there is no clear line of responsibility for communicating with disabled people. It was felt that the natural tendency of agencies engaged in the lives of disabled people to communicate separately with their client groups leads to confusion and created gaps in people's knowledge. People wanted one place that they could go to, or 'one button they could push' on the internet that would provide them with all the information that they needed; not just with regards to employment but including information about health, housing, benefits and all the other issues that impacted their lives. The current situation may be convenient for the government and non-government agencies working for disabled people, but it was not convenient for disabled people and failed to consider service provision from the point of view of the client.

There were many different suggestions for how best to communicate with disabled people in Newham. The variety reflects the fact that disabled people are not a homogeneous group and require different forms of communication:

- **Networking Events:** should be held four times a year to allow service providers and service users to meet and learn about what's available.
- **Advertising campaign:** need for a public awareness campaign about disability:

"It's commonplace to see campaigns about carers, food, vaccines so why not one about disability?"

#### **Service User**

- **One stop shop** for disabled people to go to and learn about their rights and benefits.
- **Information packs:** Doctor's could provide these to any disabled patients. This is especially relevant where disability occurs in mid-life but could also be provided to parents with disabled children. The pack could contain relevant information about healthcare, education, careers, benefits etc.
- **A Newham Magazine** could be published focusing on: Jobs, help for working, what's on and local success stories.
- **TV and Radio advertising** should be used to advertise job opportunities for disabled people.
- **Internet:** should be a virtual one stop shop for disabled people to go to and find all their needs catered for and questions answered.

## 4.3 Accessibility

Accessibility of forms and information is critical. All information needs to be available in a variety of different formats if all disabled people are able to read and understand it.

"Lots of people with learning difficulties need easy read. 'Newham People First' do a great job on this. Makes people with Learning Disabilities feel part of the process. I appreciate things in large print, but it's different for everyone...(we) need to get info out in an array of formats."

#### **Service User and Service Provider**

It was felt that the one way to make all communication genuinely accessible was to have it overseen by service users, the real experts in accessibility.

Many participants were cautious about the use of the Internet, as they believed it had fairly limited accessibility. Not only are few sites genuinely 'accessible' (although see [www.newhampeoplefirst.org](http://www.newhampeoplefirst.org) as a good example) but also many disabled people simply do not have access to an Internet connected computer. Just 50% of disabled people under the age of 65 have access to Internet at home (this compares with 62% of non-disabled people in the same age group).



## 4.4 Addressing Aspiration

'...(The) system needs to be more flexible – so people who don't fit into the normal model of work are also addressed; I'm thinking about: if you've got someone who wants to be a wheelchair dancer – where would they go? Need to broaden the focus of what is actually available; the information is there it just needs to be co-ordinated better.'

**Service User**

## 4.5 Service Providers: A Partnership not a Competition

Service Providers are all working with the same main objective: to help disabled people into sustainable employment. They need to work together in order to co-ordinate and make sure they are providing the best service possible. Everyone is competing for the same pot of money so groups tend to protect their knowledge and their information, which is ultimately bad for the disabled people they are meant to be helping:

**Disabled people need advocates who will work on behalf of the client, not for themselves, their organisation, the family/carer or other support workers.**

**Service Provider**

Partnership working does require more flexibility and encouragement but it can help with delivering a service because everyone is clear about the role that they play.

Currently, a lack of funding means high turnover of staff and projects leading to disjointed service provision for the client. Projects are not evaluated thoroughly and projects just seem to end, whether or not it has been successful doesn't appear to make any difference to whether it gets extended or replicated. A clearer funding strategy from the Government backed up by a thorough and committed evaluation of projects, would help organisations plan for the long term and improve partnership working and therefore service delivery.

Partnership working may also help a larger organisation such as Jobcentre Plus improve its own communication with service users who have a disability and may need extra services to help them find sustainable, rewarding careers. Currently they rely on one or two individuals to be an expert in everything. This is an unrealistic way of helping all Jobcentre clients access the right information. Jobcentre Plus staff need to be able to plug into the knowledge and services of other professionals:

**'I suffer from dyslexia: one of my main problems when signing on is lack of communication: they are not interested in my problem. Just interested in getting me a job. But I want to better myself, I want to put back to the community; don't want a dead-end job. I would always get jobs, and no matter what job, I'd always go up, supervisor or manager, I know I have this potential...but now I'm facing this problem as I was recently diagnosed with dyslexia; now where and how can they help me? Without all the 'you need to be working'; 'you need to do this': I know I need to be working, but where can I get this help to better myself?'**

**Service User**



## 4.6 Existing opportunities

Jobcentre Plus has a marketing team whose job it is to go out and work with employers to find out about jobs that are available but it is not a priority for them to look at jobs that would suit disabled people. Their focus is on claimants, but this is an ideal opportunity for disability to be brought to the attention of employers. Disabled people should be included in these conversations as a matter of course rather than an afterthought or an optional extra.

## 4.7 Recommendations

- Information needs to be available in accessible formats that will suit the target audience.
- One way to improve communication materials and official forms would be to incorporate customer testing by disabled people to check that the information is understandable to them. Accessibility will raise different issues for different people. For some disabled people it simply means people spending more time with them because it can be more difficult to speak and they need more time to respond to questions.
- One person/agency should have responsibility for ensuring disabled people receive all the information that they require. This should not be limited to employability issues but include housing, health, benefit advice etc, The Office for Disability Issues has a role to play in joining up service delivery organisations at a strategic level but it is important to note that it is disabled people who need to understand their services better.
- National and local agencies providing services to disabled people need to work in partnership, not competition. Those providing employability services should work towards the shared objective of helping disabled people into sustainable employment. Competition and instability amongst suppliers does not help in obtaining this objective. Partnership working between agencies and between the public, private and voluntary sectors would be enhanced by a clear and comprehensive government funding strategy with a long-term focus on supporting agencies that successfully help disabled people into sustainable employment.
- Information should not be filtered by low expectations.
- Information on employing disabled people should be part of all marketing activities undertaken by agencies such as Jobcentre Plus. It should not be a niche market discussed only with sympathetic employers.



- Information needs to be provided in a timely manner, and changes to a person's schedule or activities need to be made in consultation with the individuals involved.
- There should be more disability equality training and more employers need to be informed of their legal obligations towards disabled people.

## 5 TRANSFERABLE LESSONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY IN THE UK

In addition to the key findings and recommendations made above, there were a number of lessons identified, positive and negative, that could improve policy implementation in the field of social exclusion and poverty. They are as follows:

### 5.1 First Line 'Supported Employment' Services

First Line is a Newham Council run 'supported employment' agency for people with learning disabilities. First Line provides a range of services for users including vocational guidance, careers counselling, interview support and direct support on the job. The project also gives ongoing advice to employers in connection with individual employees and on employing people with learning disabilities. It has developed into a model of best practice providing individualised support to enable people with learning disabilities access and retain paid employment. Training and work preparation courses run regularly and there are specific courses also targeted at school pupils and college students.

In addition to these services, in 2007-8 First Line are delivering a joint project between national DWP and the Department of Health Valuing People Support Team and London Borough of Newham to test whether the application of known best practice can increase the numbers of people with a learning disability gaining employment.

Whilst First Line is clearly an exemplar project it is limited in the number of people it can help simply because it operates on a restricted budget. It chooses not to advertise its service for fear of being inundated with people that it will not have the resources to help.

### 5.2 Dedicated officer promoting the Two Ticks Scheme

The Two Ticks Scheme is a national accreditation program that employers can gain to demonstrate their commitment to employing disabled people. The application process requires the business to prove that their processes and workplaces cater to the needs of disabled employees.

City and East London is the only DWP area to have a dedicated (albeit part time) scheme resource. Other areas rely on the member of staff who initially receives an enquiry to join the scheme to then follow it through and work with the company to comply with and introduce the scheme.



Having this dedicated resource has a number of benefits including the ability to investigate cases of alleged non-compliance, particularly with regards of applicants who have met the minimum criteria not being granted the ‘guaranteed interview’. If the complaint is received promptly, there may be an opportunity to work with the company to enable the guaranteed interview within the recruitment window. Participants felt very strongly that enforcement was a key aspect of any legislation and there were some people that felt the Two Ticks symbol would benefit from more robust monitoring.

The dedicated resource can also improve the take up of the scheme by helping translate initial enquiries into accreditations by helping businesses through the process. Crucially, in an evidence-based policy environment, it also allows for monitoring of the scheme which doesn’t happen in other DWP areas.

### 5.3 Best practice in Local organisations

‘Newham People First’ and ‘Action and Rights of Disabled People in Newham’ were both excellent examples of organisations being run by disabled people and entirely staffed by disabled people. Not only were the services provided by these organisations greatly appreciated by disabled people in Newham, they also provided much needed role models for the local population which suffers from very low levels of aspiration for the disabled members of the community.

### 5.4 Role of Local Authority – driving service improvements

Whilst there was some criticism of the London Borough of Newham for some of its practices, there were a number of initiatives being undertaken by the Local Authority that were helping disabled people find work. Firstly, the authority is a Two Ticks accredited authority but other efforts include a ‘job carving’ scheme which they are trialing. This involves identifying tasks that could be performed by a person with learning disabilities and rolling the requirements of several departments into one position. Additionally the work the Authority is doing to bring together service providers and enable partnership working is also to be commended.

### 5.5 Tender Process for Government Contracts

A local example of the Government Procurement process was the recently let ‘Pathways to Work’ Contract for the City and East London area, incorporating several London Boroughs including Newham. ‘Pathways to Work’ is a new government initiative which offers a dual approach to assistance, providing people with financial support while facilitating their return to independence and the ability to earn the means to live by addressing a number of the health-related, personal and external barriers to returning to work. The initiative which has been piloted in a number of other regions started in Newham in December 2007. A formal tender process was undertaken to identify who would deliver ‘Pathways to Work’ in the City and East London area. The successful bidder was a private sector provider: ‘Work Directions’. The peer review occurred prior to the implementation of the new service although Work Directions did give a presentation on the first day of the Peer Review.



Service providers already operating in Newham were critical of the tender process. The sheer size of the contract meant that small local organisations felt unable to bid for the work. There was limited local consultation, and no requirement on the bidder to work with existing local service providers, some of whom are getting excellent results and virtually all of whom are struggling for funding.

People are hopeful that the Pathways to Work project will benefit disabled people in Newham, but if Work Directions are to make an impact they will need to work in partnership with existing service providers and develop an understanding of the local community. They will need to consult regularly and genuinely with service users. They will also need to show clearly they are interested in placing people in ‘the right job’ and not just ‘any job’.

When contracting out services of this type the Government needs to be sympathetic to the complementary service provision that may already exist in that area. Service delivery is no longer the remit of one central body but is usually the responsibility of a multitude of agencies spanning government, voluntary and private sectors. Policy-makers need to understand and acknowledge what networks and partnerships already exist and how the new initiative will impact that partnership. If the sheer size and risk associated with a government contract automatically disqualifies local organisations from applying then the government should consider whether there is other ways that they could be incorporated into tender and delivery process i.e. project-scoping for the procurement contract, the evaluation or require the successful bidder to work closely with local partner/s to deliver the service.

## 5.6 Information gap

Too often good government policies were failing to make a difference to the lives of disabled people simply because they didn’t know they existed. Examples of this included Access to Work and Benefit Protection, both schemes aimed at easing the transition back to work for disabled people.

A good communication plan should be an integral part of any new government initiative but when that initiative targets disabled people then particular care must be given to the communication strategy and how it intends to reach its audience.

There were a number of suggestions for improving how information is conveyed but there were two points that were strongly supported by all participants.

Firstly, accessibility remains paramount. Service users still have difficulty obtaining information in the format that they need it to be in. It is particularly unusual to see information available in ‘easyread’ format. Frustration was expressed at being told to find information on the internet. Whilst people accept that the internet can be useful for some people, it fails to recognise that many people cannot afford access to the internet and for many disabled people, computers remain inaccessible.

The second was that people wanted one place they could go to get all the information they needed about having a disability. They felt that there should be one agency responsible for communicating with disabled people. Participants wanted a one stop shop and ‘one button to push’ on the internet that would provide them with everything they needed.



## 6 CONCLUSION

The Peer Review was a unique opportunity to bring together a group of people who share knowledge, passion and an enthusiasm for empowering disabled people to have choice, independence and control over their own lives. There were a number of initiatives from both the government and voluntary sectors that are delivering successful results for disabled people in Newham. There was a great deal of praise for government policies such as ‘Access to Work’ but a surprising lack of awareness about these initiatives. Knowledge of these policies seemed limited to a small group of specialists. The impression was that improved communication of the policies already in place would result in an increase in employment for disabled people.

Attitudes of the general public demonstrate a misunderstanding of disability and the impact it can have on an individual’s life. This continues to present major obstacles to the full social inclusion of disabled people. The Disability Discrimination Act has raised awareness about the treatment of disabled people, but discrimination continues to be part of everyday life for the participants at this event. Discrimination manifested itself both in overt and oblique ways. Overtly rude and unhelpful bus drivers were a constant source of irritation in Newham. But a subtle and perhaps more harmful form of discrimination was the low aspirations that society has for disabled people. Some participants felt that low aspiration was institutionalised in Newham. They felt it started in school and continued into adult life with educational and employment opportunities determined by what society thinks disabled people can and cannot do. But low aspiration was also happening at an individual level. Parents, teachers, carers and service providers were often guilty of low aspirations for the disabled people in their care. This type of discrimination will not be tackled by legislation and policies alone; only a sea-change in public opinion about how we view disability will see an end to this type of discrimination.

Participants were hopeful that projects such as Bridging the Policy Gap would begin to raise awareness about these issues and result in real improvements to the lives of disabled people. What disabled people wanted most of all was well summarised by the chairperson in his final address:

**‘We want our worth shown and we want our worth proven. We want the jobs that we want, we want to be an active and vibrant part of the job market.’**

**Pat Stack**

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## Appendix One: Participant List

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Jon Adams	Shona Honeyman	Pat Stack
Nadine Adams-Austin	Audrey Hunter	Mandalina Stepniewska
Rashidat Aina-Obe	Theresa Irving	Helen Stroker
Imran Ali	Maxine Irving	Marion Summers
A Amos	Neil Johnston	Linda Toms
Eve Anderson	Margaret Joseph	Katrina Vickers
Linda Bailey	Vicky Kankam	Maina Wanyoike
Gerri Bird	Stephanie Kaye	Neil Wilson
Christine Bowden	Peter Kelly	Keith Young
Phillip Bowley	Councillor Joy Laguda	Marion Summers
Chris Burston	Neil Langhorn	Linda Toms
H Charles	Tina Lawal	Katrina Vickers
Ajay Choksy	Harvey Leaman	Maina Wanyoike
Julian Clarke	Anil Luhar	Neil Wilson
Richard Court	Averil Lynch	Keith Young
Chetan Davdra	Sally Mackenzie	
Rita Davies	Natasha Maitland	
Janice Docherty	Ian Mather	
Katherine Duffy	Terry McDermott	
Alan Duhig	Angus Mckenzie-Davie	
Donald Dunn	Celia Minoughan	
Christopher Duran	Stuart Mol	
Burhan Dyer	Alan Newcombe	
Tal Faulkner	Kevin Owens	
Carlen Finn	Sarifa Patel	
Anne Fitzsimons	Amit Pithiya	
Tracey Gordon	Leanne Purvis	
Gwineth Grant	Feizal Rajabally	
Jacky Gruhn	Rita Ratel	
Karen Grunhut	Ali Safder	
Rose Hassan	Ameet Savajiani	
Gordon Hastie	Aladin Seaforth	
Alison Hazel	Garth Shephard	
Alison Hesketh	Tee Somolu	



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## Appendix Two: The Final Session

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For the final session of the Newham Peer Review we asked the groups to put together a list that set out what Employers should do to help disabled people into employment and what they should not do. Below is the result of that exercise.

### FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TO GET THE JOBS THAT THEY WANT THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO:

- Employers should: be polite & say hello.
- Publicity should be in different formats and bear in mind the diversity of Newham.
- Employers need to be flexible.
- More employers should undertake Disability Equality Training: Critical that senior management undertake this training in order to cascade the learning and commitment through the organisation. Also important that it involves direct encounters with disabled people to try and break down barriers and ignorance.
- Information must be accessible.
- Support needs to be available for interviews and human resources should be aware of the interviews.
- Be aware of Transport issues.
- Government need to listen to disabled people.
- Must start with good quality appropriate education throughout life – disability can happen at any time.
- Recruitment process needs to be more inclusive and more creative (working interviews as an option).
- Positive, visible and high profile role models.
- Stress people's abilities not their disability.
- Find out what the disabled person actually wants to do and then have a flexible approach to finding them work. Pay attention to the individual – job should fit around the person, not the person around the job.
- All disabled people should have a career plan.



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## FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TO GET THE JOBS THAT THEY WANT THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS NOT TO DO:

- Employers should ensure that there is: no swearing, no repeating and no pushing of disabled people in the work place.
- Disabled people shouldn't be forced into unsuitable jobs just for the sake of meeting targets.
- Employers should not discriminate.
- Don't assume all disabled people are the same. All disabled people are individuals.
- No exclusions.
- Access to Work is too slow and puts disabled people and employers off.
- Do not ignore employee's aspirations.
- Don't judge on first impressions: "Look at me not to my wheels; don't speak to my carer, speak to me".
- Don't rush disabled people. Sometimes they understand perfectly but need time to respond and ask questions.
- Focus on the process rather than the person.
- Don't exploit people via 'voluntary' work.
- Don't confuse the carers with the client: listen to what the client is saying.



## Appendix Three: Peer Review Agenda

### THE NEWHAM PEER REVIEW AGENDA

Day One

TIME	ACTIVITY
<b>12.00</b>	<b>Lunch and Registration</b>
1.00	Introduction and Administration by Chairperson: Pat Stack
1.05	Welcome by Deputy Mayor Christine Bowden
1.20	Icebreaker engaging all participants
1.30	Introduction to the project: purpose & desired outcomes Sally Mackenzie, Bridging the Policy Gap
	Introductions of Reference Group Peter Kelly, The Poverty Alliance
1.45	Introduction to the National Action Plan social inclusion & how this project forms part of it  Chris Burston, Social Inclusion Unit, Department for Work and Pensions
2.00	The Stories  Opportunity to hear from those whose lives are directly affected by the policy  Imran Ali Maxine Irving
<b>2.45</b>	<b>Break</b>
3.00	Presentations about policy under review  Overview of Government Welfare to Work Policies Chris Burston, Social Inclusion Unit, Department for Work and Pensions  Overview of Newham Routes to Employment disability employment Celia Minoughan, Newham Council Social Regeneration Unit  Pathways to Work: Jon Adams, Work Directions  Q and A
<b>3.45</b>	<b>Close Day One</b>



## THE NEWHAM PEER REVIEW AGENDA

### Day Two

TIME	ACTIVITY
<b>10.00</b>	<b>Tea/Coffee</b>
10.30	Welcome and admin announcements
10.35	Introduction of discussion questions and benchmarks developed to assess the success of this policy
11.00 – 12.30	Discussions & investigations: determining success. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x 45 minute workshops on 2 of the issues raised by disabled people in preparatory meetings: what has worked and what has not; identify transferable elements</li> <li>• 3 x Squad 5 investigative interviews with local people from community and a range of relevant organisations on theme of employers role</li> </ul>
<b>12.30</b>	<b>Lunch rejoined by squad 5</b>
1.30 -2.15	Discussions & investigations: determining success (ctd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x 45 minute workshop on issue raised by disabled people</li> <li>• 1 x Squad 5 interview on theme of employers role</li> </ul>
2.15	Identifying the lessons: Large Group discussion
3.00	Evaluation of the peer review (written questionnaire)
<b>3.15</b>	<b>Conclusion of peer review</b>









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**DWP** Department for  
Work and Pensions



**Tea in the Pot**  
**Anti Poverty Network Cymru**  
**Social Policy Task Force**  
**Action and Rights of Disabled People in Newham**



**LASE**  
Local Authorities &  
Social Exclusion Network