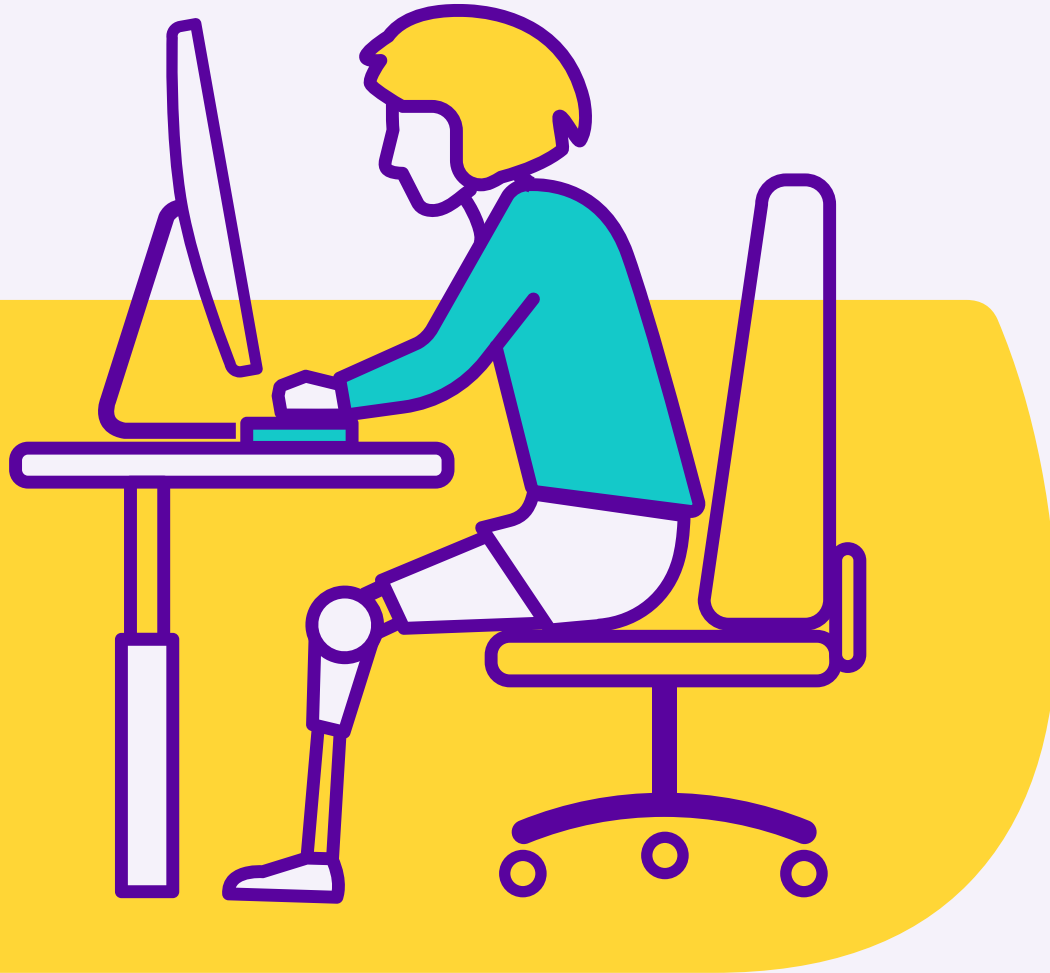


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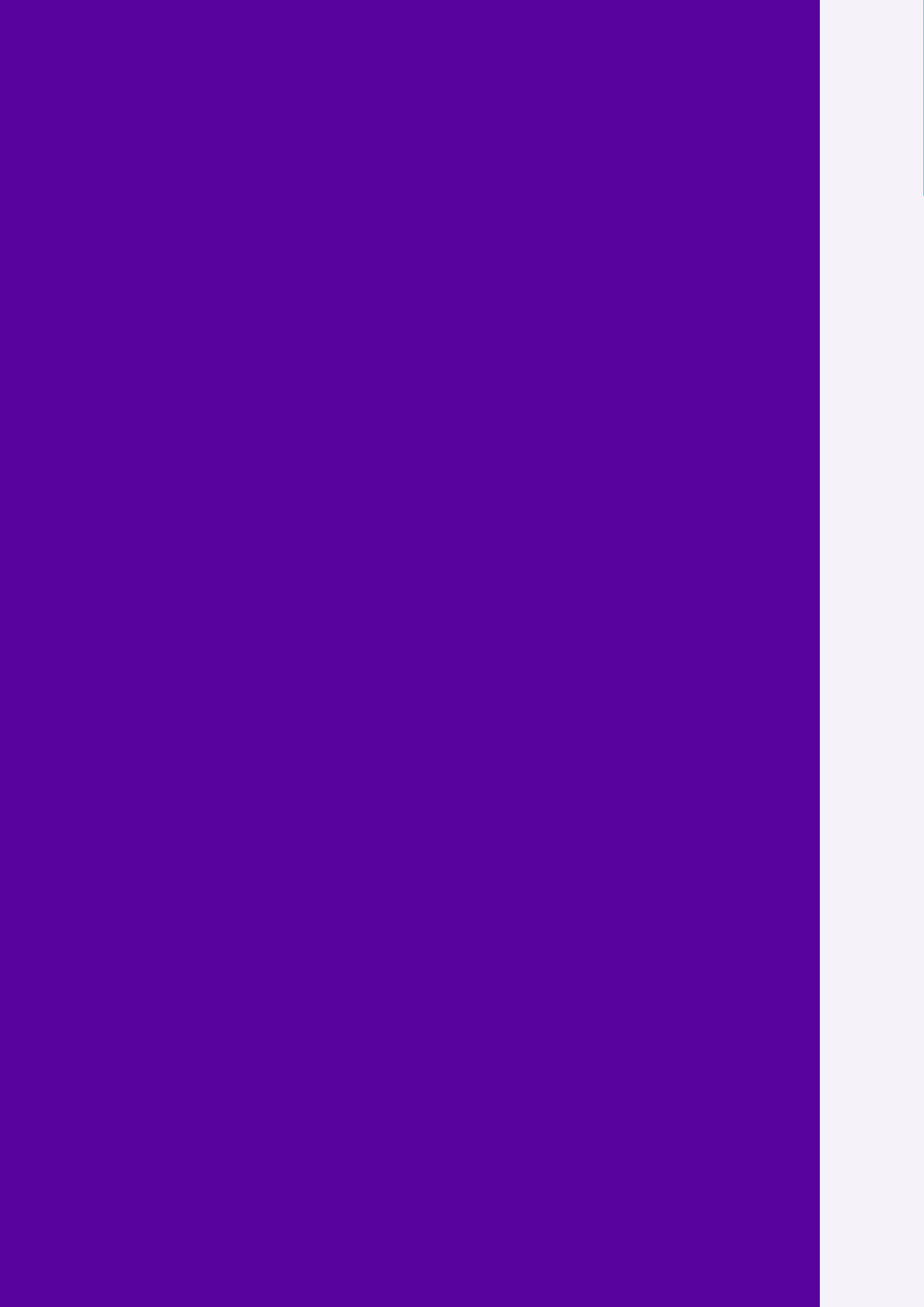


Our Lives, Our Journey

Starting a new job

Dr Brendan McGinley
and Andy McKeown

SCOPE = Equality for
disabled people



Executive summary

We are proud to launch *Our Lives, Our Journey*. This study is the first known qualitative longitudinal study to follow the lives of disabled people and their families in the UK.

Disabled people tell us that there are key moments of change in their lives which have a big impact on their experiences as a disabled person. We call these transition points.

At these transition points, the support available, the interventions which take place, and the decisions disabled people and their families take – or are taken for them – can make a significant impact on what happens next.

This study is designed to understand these transition points better. Too often we only see disabled people's lives as a snapshot or single moment in time but disabled people's lives change.

Becoming an adult, moving into work, growing up, adjusting to new health and support needs. These experiences are all part of a journey, a story of progress and setbacks, action and inaction that is rarely told in disability research. We aim, over five years, to tell this story.

This report tells the experiences of 21 people who have recently started a new job. These participants told us about the impact starting a new job had on their lives. Work gave them more financial opportunities, more choice, more independence, and increased purchasing power. But employment meant more than just a better financial situation, it improved the participants' confidence and self worth.

Many participants felt that the public didn't expect them to have a job and that the contribution disabled people could offer the employers was frequently undervalued. This perception is a major barrier to disabled people entering work, but it also affects the whole employment journey.

According to our participants, barriers created by misperceptions of disabled people originate from a lack of awareness and understanding of their needs. This in turn results in a persistent lack of support. This repeated experience over time has made disabled people feel like the problem is with them, rather than them having to navigate inflexible and unsupportive work environments.

The participants also told us how they had to change their behaviour when moving into employment because of repeated negative experiences. Individuals learnt that they needed to put in extra effort; in their job searches and applications, working without necessary support, putting up with insensitive comments, facing extra costs, or educating their employer about disability.

These experiences have forced participants to accept a situation unacceptable to most non-disabled people. They often compromised their employment options and opportunities, their privacy, their earning potential, and their employment aspirations.

Encouragingly, however, we have also seen how some workplaces and employment services can be supportive of disabled people, positively understanding and meeting their needs.

Participants reported a number of key enablers which led them to successful employment. The most effective and positive approaches for disabled people were demonstrated by employers and staff which:

- **embraced reasonable adjustments**, such as accessible working schedules and working from home
- **fought the disabled person's corner**, such as support during Access to Work complications or long time delays getting equipment, and being supportive of recommendations made by occupational health services
- were clearly **approachable, understanding, and open to suggestions**
- **thought of practical solutions** when faced with issues such as access and making adjustments to provide equality. This especially is a change from the focus usually being on the disabled person to figure out solutions.

A positive approach to a disabled person's requirements and practical applications of good practice can make a massive difference when employing disabled people and can be a huge step towards creating equality in the workplace.

Through following our participants' experiences of entering work, we found:

There are multiple, interconnecting barriers and enablers that affect a disabled person's employment journey. Common issues include low expectations of themselves and their abilities at work, through to inaccessible transport options. Crucially though, family and friends provide important financial and emotional support, as well as valued support found online.

Past experiences of employers play a key role in employment for disabled people. Previous employer reactions to an individual's impairment or condition shaped and limited search choices and behaviour in work. Particularly in how people talk or do not talk about their impairment or condition.

Job searches can be long, with some participants applying for hundreds of jobs before finding employment. A negative perception of gaps in employment history due to health conditions was frequently highlighted by participants. They also discussed the benefits and risks of disclosing their impairment.

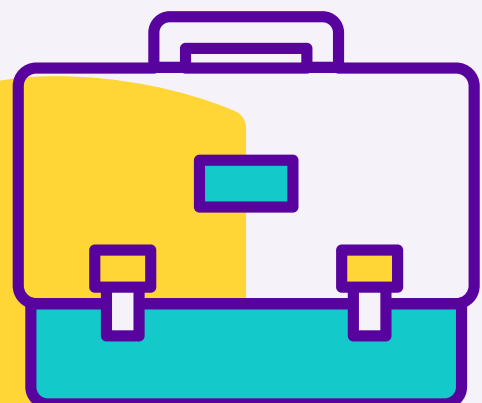
Overwhelmingly, participants highlighted that the most effective type of employment support was personalised and tailored to their needs. Employment support currently provided by the Jobcentre produced polarised views – either the support did not meet disabled peoples' needs and they opposed the use of sanctions, or it helped them to secure employment. Charities also offered sources of support, and were particularly effective when tailored to the individual.

Choosing to discuss conditions or impairments when in work was based on a range of factors. For people with a visible impairment, it wasn't even a choice, whereas for others, it was based on how they felt disability would be perceived in the workplace. Where disabled people did share and were accepted, they reported extremely positive employment experiences.

For some disabled people there are essential adjustments that are needed to do their jobs. However, there was often uncertainty over what adjustments would be seen as 'reasonable'. Delays and problems with the Access to Work scheme meant many disabled people started work without the support they needed. Many end up paying for adjustments themselves so not to burden their employer. These issues were felt more acutely by the participants with higher support needs.

Attitudes of staff played a vital role in a successful start to employment. Managers were key in getting support for disabled workers. While colleagues' attitudes were important to feeling accepted in a workplace and working well with other people. Both played a key role in a successful start to employment.

Now, our participants all have a job and report generally positive experiences from their current employer. We will look to see how their employment journey progresses over the course of the study.



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Introduction

Sponsored by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, 'Our Lives, Our Journey' is a pioneering longitudinal qualitative research study, following the lives of disabled people over five years. The research aims to provide a rich qualitative evidence base into the life journeys of disabled people, highlighting key transitions points in their lives.

The study focuses on four specific groups of disabled people:

- parents of an early years disabled child
- disabled people entering adulthood (aged 16 to 21)
- disabled people who have recently started a new job
- disabled people who have recently acquired an impairment.

Data was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant. We discussed their life journey, their aspirations, and their experiences of disability and everyday equality. We looked in detail at how they negotiated key transition points in their lives (for further details of the methodology and sampling used please see the appendix).

The interviews from year one of the study were thematically analysed and the key themes across all participants were then explored in detail.

This report details the lived experiences of 21 disabled people, all of whom had recently started a new job.



Our participants

Gareth works for an agency providing care in various nursing homes.

John works as an administrator for NHS community services.

Mushtaq works through an agency in a call centre for a public sector organisation.

Patrick recently worked as a pricing agent in the private sector.

Jonathan works as a fundraiser for a charity, and is a trustee director of another charity.

Ashley works as a co-ordinator within a youth group.

Jen recently worked as a customer assistant in a supermarket.

Mel works as a business support co-ordinator for a charity.

Marie-Claire works to get long-term unemployed and disabled people into work.

Anne works as an administrator within a local authority.

Nicki works as a practice educator within healthcare services.

Rosie works on placement as part of a doctorate qualification.

Sophie works as a manager in a charity.

Rachel works as a consultant in a hospital.

Ellen works in childcare within a nursery and in a nursing home.

Michael works in customer service and administration in a sports club.

Emma works as a supervisor in the Civil Service.

Nichola works as a project assistant in a charity.

Jenny works as a buyer in the food industry.

Chloe works as an assistant in a library.

Claire works as a lunchtime supervisor in a school.

1.

Societal barriers and support structures

Starting a new job is an important moment of change in someone's life. It's a transition point that for many people is repeated throughout their careers. This process allows people to learn from their experiences and improve their working life.

But our participants found this learning is dominated by negative experiences which affect and limit their employment options.

Even before starting a new job, participants needed to overcome barriers imposed by society but were also helped by support from friends, family and support groups.

It's not just the specific workplace that affected our participant's ability to enter, stay in, and progress in employment. Social factors such as attitudes towards disability, access to transport and the different support services that are available make a huge difference. These are barriers and support needs that non-disabled people are unlikely to encounter or need, but disabled people will face continuously in their careers. Some participants were able to overcome these barriers or have the support structures to do so. However, that leaves many who don't, and who have to overcome these issues on their own.



Attitudes

Participants often found non-disabled people were shocked when they found out they work. The general assumption is that disabled people cannot work. This finding backs up the common misperception of disabled people being less productive at work¹. When people found out a participant was working, there was sometimes a change in how they were treated. Emma recalled a conversation with a non-disabled person who asked:

“Do you work?’ When you say, ‘Yes,’ they just seem shocked that you are working, which is a bit weird, really. Just because you’re disabled doesn’t mean that you can’t work.”

Emma

Because disabled people generally face negative attitudes towards disability, our participants felt some anxiety when they found a job and faced the prospect of going through recruitment. Personal experience of recruitment showed them that, generally, employers did not wish to employ disabled people.

They were also aware, and sometimes afraid of the stigma of disabled people in the workplace. These attitudes and behaviours can create an unwelcoming or alienating environment. The negative attitudes participants faced often had a lasting effect, meaning they had to mentally break through those barriers to get on with everyday life.

¹ ‘The Perception Gap’ report by Scope found that 32 per cent people think that disabled people are not as productive as non-disabled people at least some of the time.
https://www.scope.org.uk/scope/media/files/campaigns/disability_perception_gap_report.pdf

Transport

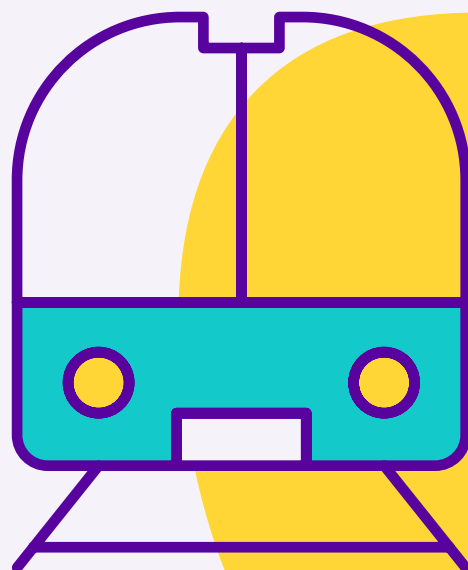
Transport is a big part of getting to and from work and being able to successfully do your job. Having accessible public transport links close by was a key consideration when employed or job-seeking participants were buying or renting housing. Finding a home near accessible transport wasn't always possible, which meant participants had highly time-consuming daily routines, with long commutes to work.

In Marie-Claire's case, her job options were limited because she relied so heavily on public transport, in addition to the logistics of her daily school run. She discussed potential barriers. "It's not just got to be the right job, it's got to be in the right place as well because, otherwise, it makes everything just too complicated, too logistically-complicated ... getting everyone from A to B at the right time with the right bits and pieces without us walking 100 miles or spending absolute fortunes on a taxi".

There were fears employers would worry about employing disabled staff who would have to rely on taxis to get to work or travel within their role. Jonathan had to travel a lot as a fundraiser and felt pressure from prospective employers who expected him to drive:

"I still got about, lots of taxis, all kinds of transport, that kind of thing, I still managed. So, I wanted a new job [and] despite my achievements, I knew that it would be very difficult for me actually to get taken on by another employer because of the driving thing."

Jonathan



Family and friends

Family and friends supported participant's employment in different ways:

- **Emotional support** – Navigating the barriers faced when trying to get in, stay in, and progress in work can be hard work. Partners played an important support role for participants to overcome these issues. Jenny explains, “he’s been very good, and he’s obviously seen me up and down and in and out of different jobs, and different problems with people and jobs... So, yes, he’s been very good at supporting me throughout all of that”.

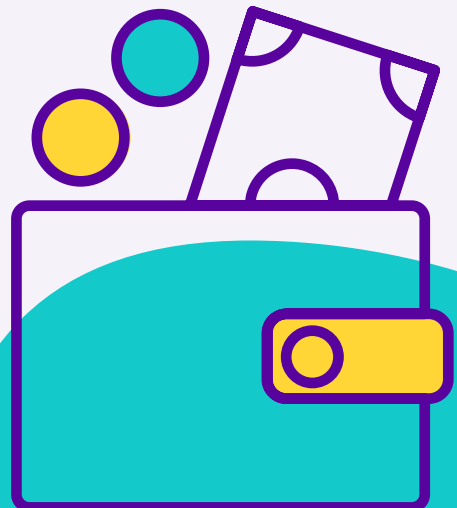
Sophie's friends encouraged her to think positively and were vital to her feeling more confident.



“When I got the job they were like, ‘Oh, this is really great, I’m really excited,’ which is not what I was feeling at all. So, getting that kind of feedback was really valuable because I didn’t quite trust what I was feeling. So, to have someone that I trust to be like, ‘No, no, this is a good thing and it’s going to be fine and you’re going to do it’.”

Sophie

- **Financial support** – Some participants earned relatively low incomes, simply because they wanted to work. They ended up taking jobs that hindered, not helped, their career aspirations, and were only financially sustainable because their partners shared their income. As Nichola describes, “my current job, because it’s three days a week and it’s low pay, the only reason I’m able to do that job is because I’m with [my partner]”.



Home and support services

Social workers and support workers who provided personal care and support were significant in helping people to start a new job successfully. This type of support included personal help, cooking, housekeeping, and domestic work.

In Chloe's case, an important factor was that her support worker ensured Chloe's clothes were washed and ready for work; "If she weren't to come on that Wednesday, then I wouldn't know where anything was [and] all my [work] clothes would be dirty". The support arrangements were made by Chloe's social worker, who she would like to have the option of seeing more often. Her home support service was essential to Chloe successfully starting a new job.

Digital support

Because of gaps in employment services, participants often conducted online research to find what support was available. Emma, for example, became aware of services available to her, "only because of what I found out myself. It's not anything that the government or the Jobcentre have gone out of their way to make me aware of. I've had to find that information myself".

Potential support options were also suggested by other disabled people online, often met through Facebook groups and other online communities, who told participants about services they should investigate.



2.

Work experience

The participants we spoke to had been in employment before, some for a few years, others for the majority of their lives.

Volunteering for a charity was often a path to paid employment. This path seems to work for all involved. It allowed volunteers to gain experience and see what it was like working within an organisation. It gave the organisation a first-hand experience of the value volunteers could bring.

Unfortunately, however long their employment history, all participants agreed that their previous work experiences were generally negative. Previous employment had shown them a range of poor experiences, which left a lasting impression and influenced their current choices and behaviour. Emma discussed “their general attitude towards my health problems. It was almost seen as an inconvenience to them, and, sort of, like, a problem we’ve got to deal with”.

On the more severe end of the scale, some participants have been ‘pushed out’ of work due to a lack of support.

The experience of our participants tells us employers’ basic understanding of the Equality Act 2010 was poor. Participants felt employers should already understand how the Act applied to their disabled employees and were frustrated with often having to educate employers about delivering equality for disabled people.



When reflecting on past experiences, participants discussed two key lessons learnt:

1 Being clear about support needs. On reflection, participants felt it was better to ask for help, rather than struggle through. They were often hard on themselves for not speaking out in the past.

However, assistance was only asked for when colleagues and managers encouraged it or were felt to be supportive.

2 Pro-actively making sure employers respond appropriately to support needs. Some participants had worked in places which were not inclusive, and made disabled people feel they had to downplay their impairment or condition. As Mel explained, “you were almost supposed to hide it and get on without drawing attention to your blindness”.

However, participants knew the importance of having the right support, and had to be assertive enough to educate their employers about this.

“[Employers] don’t know the procedures to follow. I’m the one who has to teach them how they should be doing things properly. I’m just getting a bit fed up with it, to be honest.”

Jenny

Within inclusive environments, people felt confident to do this, with positive results. Patrick experienced a supportive culture and “it was the first time in a place of work, I didn’t feel disabled”. Patrick recently worked as a pricing agent in the private sector.

Overall, the majority of participants felt the support provided by previous employers was generally inadequate. However, participants’ negative past experiences helped them to spot possible ‘warning signs’ of low support when hunting for jobs with future employers.

3.

Finding a job

Job search

Searching for jobs is the start of our participant's journey. We know some participants' experiences have already led them to restrict their choice of employer, resulting in less opportunities. Other participants are having to go beyond normal expectations just to apply for a job.

Various methods of searching and applying for jobs were used. Some people, like Sophie, applied to most positions advertised within their geographic area:

“I applied to pretty much anything and everything.”

Sophie

The process of searching for appropriate employment was exhausting for some participants, many who reported suffering from job search burn-out. Failing to secure interviews and the subsequent work took a significant emotional toll. Furthermore, having to apply for so many jobs caused participants to lose their appetite for tailoring each application, harming their chances of securing a successful employment opportunity.

Filling in so many applications was very time consuming and the applications often ran into the hundreds before a job offer.

“I applied for about 200 to 300 jobs.”

Jen

Searching and applying for jobs online was common practice, being faster and less physically demanding than applying in person. As Nichola described, “everything's online these days, which helps, there's no pounding the streets”.



Choosing potentially supportive employers

An approach used by some participants was to look at what support and accessibility was provided by the employer before applying. This approach meant less time wasted for the participant applying and for the employer. It also meant the participant wasn't disappointed if they found an employer to have negative attitudes and behaviours towards disability. However, this meant a participant's perception of a potential employer was critical, which could be accurate or not.

Seeing a staff member with a visible impairment or condition was found to be an indicator of good disability support. However, this can obviously only occur when an employee is visibly disabled. People with invisible impairments or conditions may still struggle with not being accepted unless the employer has taken visible steps to promote an inclusive working environment².

Some employers knew about the participant's condition before they applied, usually because the participant made it clear. Anne, for example, wanted to make sure before she applied that she would have the appropriate support in place, stating in an email to the employer, 'this is my situation, does it make sense to apply?'. Some participants had more confidence applying when they knew the employer was aware of their condition, for example, when the participant was personally recommended for a role.

Unusual methods

Some participants used atypical methods to access a career path or position. For example, Jonathan created his own tailor-made position and developed a 'business case' to pitch the role to local employers. The job Jonathan wanted usually required driving, but as he is currently unable to drive due to his physical impairment, he showed the role could work using taxis and public transport. This is a positive example of how using innovative methods can work. Unfortunately it's another example of the lengths disabled people sometime have to go to, to secure a job when most non-disabled people wouldn't need to.

² 'Let's Talk' report by Scope includes recommendations for employers to promote an inclusive workplace <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-talk>

Applications

Filling in application forms was straight forward for almost all participants, although not all application processes were very accessible, for example, for people who were visually impaired:

“Application forms were quite hard, simply because I didn’t have the computer skills to do it. I didn’t have the software to be able to fill it in. I had to get someone else to help me fill in the forms, so I couldn’t do it independently because at the time, I didn’t have any speech software on my computer.”

Marie-Claire

Gaps in employment

Participants felt another barrier to getting a job was how employers considered employment gaps in CVs, particularly where they were directly related to their condition. In the case of Anne, for example, a recruitment agency was helping her to get a job with a charity. Anne’s recruitment consultant was very confident in her, but then they spoke to the employer:

“The feedback was that there were just too many gaps in my CV. I had explained why there were gaps in my CV and two of them were health related. [They] shouldn’t really have told me that I suppose, because it was evidence of discrimination... the spotty CV is a function of the disability. I thought it was just awful.”

Anne



Participants who had been out of work for a long time felt a lack of recent work references to be a barrier. They felt this was seen as negative by employers, putting them at a disadvantage. When coupled with a CV containing periods of unemployment related to their condition some disabled people felt they had less chance of getting a job than a non-disabled person.

‘Are you disabled?’

Before interviewing, employers usually provided an opportunity to indicate if you were disabled, for example using an equality monitoring form. Most applicants used that opportunity. Some applications went as far as to ask how many health-related days off they had within the past year.

Indicating a condition or impairment in the application was seen by some people as putting employers off, mostly because previous employers had not been inclusive.

Patrick, for example, felt employers would be put off knowing his condition from the start, “because of the connotations, that your social skills are terrible... when I said in the interview that I have sensory overload, and [the interviewer] was like, ‘Yes, my nephew’s got autism.’ I thought, I don’t want to say no, because that’s exactly what this is.” Patrick was reluctant to reveal more as he felt the employer would make decisions regarding his potential and needs based on preconceptions of the condition.

It was sometimes impossible to know if adjustments may be needed in the future, and what they might be. Some participants told their employers they may have support needs in the future, as a way of making sure they were aware and on board. It also provided peace of mind to the applicant, knowing their employer had already agreed to provide support.

Some participants didn’t disclose their disability on their application form as the wording of the statement implied a need for adjustments. We also found that participants who identified as a disabled person in the application process were not always contacted to discuss any adjustments needed for interview.

People with a visible condition often felt pressure during interviews to discuss their health if they had not previously indicated their condition. Nichola mentioned her conditions in her application “because otherwise, in an interview situation for example, they just, if I don’t address them or acknowledge them, they tend to become the elephant in the room”.

Feeling like employers will be put off by indicating their disability is a result of participants’ bad employment experiences. It forms a negative impression around some employers, and further contributes to the general feeling of being disadvantaged and disabled by society.

Employment Services

A range of services was used to help search and apply for jobs, such as the Jobcentre and Remploy. Charitable services were also used when government support did not meet participants' needs.

Jobcentre

The Jobcentre received mostly very good or very bad reviews from our participants, with few opinions in between. Negative views were based on the support – or lack of it – provided, in addition to the threat and experience of sanctions, with Nichola describing Jobcentre staff as “bullies”. However some people like Anne were “really taken aback by how helpful the Jobcentre staff were.” This showed the benefits and potential of the Jobcentre, but that users of the service had very different experiences.

Some participants felt the Jobcentre simply did not know how to support disabled people. For example, in Emma's case, she felt the Jobcentre did not have any useful impact on her search for a job, and, like Mel, felt the advisors did not know anything about supporting a disabled person. Staff told Emma she knew more about how disabled people re-entered work than they did, since she did extensive research.

“They actually turned around to me and said, ‘You know more about things that are on offer than we do’ and I [thought] ‘Well, hang on a minute that’s your job, you should know about some of the disability schemes, things like the Access to Work.’”

Mel

Emma has since avoided the Jobcentre “like the plague” and, similarly, Mel also said she would do anything before going to the Jobcentre.

Enabling experiences

Using employment services (provided by both statutory and voluntary organisations) gave our participants access to potentially useful tools that enabled them to find jobs. When these were missing from, or neglected by the employment service, they created more barriers.

- **Personalised support** – Tailored support was consistently highlighted as an enabler to successfully finding a job and had a strong impact on how participants felt about the employment services they used. Sophie told us, “they didn’t try and funnel everything down a, ‘you’re disabled,’ route. They said they just saw me as a whole person, they were like, ‘Okay, so, what can you do and what’s more difficult and where are we going to fit with all this?’ Like, ‘Let’s just maybe go for it and see what happens.’ They had fewer preconceived ideas”.
- **Understanding of a participant’s current and potential support needs** – In Patrick’s case, he felt staff were understanding of his needs in terms of which jobs he felt confident applying for. Patrick discussed this with his advisor who, “appreciates the fact that there will be lots of jobs that they send out in their own internal job board online that I won’t be applying for because ‘I wouldn’t be comfortable working there’ – she’s made a special note for that because otherwise they want everyone to apply for everything”.
- **Seeing the potential in people** – Participants valued the positivity and lack of preconceptions. For instance, Sophie’s employment advisor helped build Sophie’s confidence, playing the role of ‘cheerleader’ which she found very positive.
- **Disabled Jobcentre staff** – Disabled staff working at the Jobcentre were extremely helpful, because they were understanding and fully supportive in helping find suitable employment.
- **Additional service provision** – Participants told us about a range of other enablers to employment they felt were useful, from financial support for interview related costs, having a social support network, help with finding a place to live while they found work, or support workers accompanying them at interview. All these were felt to help with general living as well as getting a job. Participants also pointed out that not having access to some support, such as information and communication technology skills training created further barriers.

4.

Interview experiences

Most participants were interviewed for their current positions except some who, for example, were recruited through an agency or passed a skills test.

Although guaranteed interviews were supposed to promote equality, they weren't popular with everyone. Some participants wondered if they were invited for interviews for genuine reasons, or simply for being disabled.

Adjustments for interviews

Some participants with physical conditions discussed adjustments to ensure their interview was accessible. This could lead to a better interview, if the adjustments happened, indicating a supportive environment.

For example, in Anne's interview, she asked for specific allowances, such as wearing trainers and other clothes to interview, as she was worried she would come across as 'scruffy' without having that conversation beforehand. Her employer was very understanding, which Anne had hoped for, as she had targeted her search towards employers she felt to be inclusive.

When adjustments couldn't be met, it led to problems. For instance, Jenny was unsure if her recruiter knew about her physical impairment; the interview location had no disabled parking, an 'awkward' spiral staircase, and no lift. The recruiter did not ask Jenny about support needs or adjustments for interview. Jenny explained:

"I actually said to the receptionist, 'Have you got a lift here?' She said, 'No, sorry'... So, I was, again, starting to think, 'Could I cope with this? Maybe,' but it's all on me... I knew they wouldn't put a lift in. It was maternity cover, so there was no way that was happening."

Jenny

Jenny was aware employers had to make reasonable adjustments, but during the interview stage she wasn't sure what changes the employer would make.

For Michael, discussing adjustments stopped the recruitment process entirely. He was told at an interview that the job wouldn't be suitable for him due to his physical impairment. He mentioned his impairment to the recruiter, but the recruiter did not pass the information on, so Michael felt everybody's time was wasted. Recruiters were often found to be at the root of awkward interview discussions and inaccessible interviews.

Discussing workplace support needs

Discussing support needs at work can be a tough decision for disabled people, as we found out in our previous research, Let's Talk³. Support needs were not always discussed during the interview stage, despite the participant stating they were disabled in applications. When support needs were discussed, flexible working, job shares, and part-time hours were the most common subjects raised in interviews, often brought up by the participant.

When they were discussed and able to be met, they led to a positive impression to starting work. For example, Anne feel like she'd "landed on [her] feet" when her employer mentioned they had sit-stand adjustable desks.

Participants highlighted that sometimes support needs were discussed at interview but quickly forgotten by employers. For example, despite Gareth discussing what he was and wasn't able to do without adjustments, his employer often asked him to complete tasks he previously said he could not do without support.

"They're still ringing me up, getting me to do stuff that I've said I won't do... if I hadn't told them to start with, that would be fair enough, but I had."

Gareth

³ 'Let's Talk' report by Scope (2017) <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-talk>



A couple of participants used the phrase “in one ear and out the other” when describing the impact of discussing their condition during interviews.

Jonathan said, “obviously I wasn’t willing for that to happen again”. He wrote a guide to his condition and gave it to his employer so they would be better informed and able to make the reasonable adjustments he would need for equality.

Rosemary took the approach of writing half a page explaining her physical impairment, because when she mentioned it at interview, she found employers “haven’t taken that in” in her experience.

Another new finding in this study was that it was up to the participants to not only lead discussions on their support needs, but consistently remind employers about what had been previously made clear to them.

Even though we have The Equality Act 2010 designed to relieve the pressures faced by disabled people, it’s clear most are still experiencing attitudes and behaviours that result in continued inequality.

5.

Starting a job

Discussing health and workplace support needs

Starting a job should be an exciting and positive experience for everybody, whoever you are. But for disabled people there are extra complications and considerations around getting the necessary support they need to do their job. This can start with the decision to discuss their impairment and condition.

Avoiding discussing a condition

As found in previous research⁴, some participants did not wish to discuss their condition, because they thought it may create potential issues with their employers. However, many felt it was sometimes unavoidable, particularly those with visible conditions.

In this study we found that feeling believed or understood about their needs was important for people starting a new position. Unfortunately, this was not everyone's experience, and this made participants think twice about what they shared.

It is important to note that disabled people were usually the first to discuss support needs, such as raising accessibility requirements at interview. It was rarely the employer who initiated the discussion.

A minority of participants did not speak to their employer about their impairment or condition, or their support needs. Some felt it was better if they could manage without discussing any aspect of their health. Others had previous experiences which put them off discussing support needs, such as in Sophie's case:

“I'd accepted the job, but before I started. I filled out a form and I was honest [about my situation]. But the day after that form [was received], the job no longer existed. Now, I can prove nothing, but that does, kind of, put me off telling anyone anything.”

Sophie

As previously discussed, this is consistent with feelings participants had that job opportunities vanished as soon as they mentioned their impairment or condition.

4 'Let's Talk' report by Scope (2017) <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-talk>

Being open

As found in previous research⁵, many participants were generally open about discussing their condition and support needs with colleagues and managers. For many, discussing their condition created a useful dialogue to get everyone involved. This led to a more open and less awkward workplace atmosphere.

“I always feel better when I can open up to my colleagues, then that means they can be more helpful when I need some help.”

Michael

Contact theory⁶ tells us discussing impairments or conditions with non-disabled people can raise their awareness, which can promote equality and help remove stigma. Some participants who discussed disability with non-disabled colleagues found this to be true. Rachel works as a consultant in a hospital and had open conversations about her mental and physical conditions, as she found them to help with the education of her work colleagues.

A benefit of open discussion was, if any issues arose in work relating to support needs, the participant could show they were open and honest about their condition. As Jonathan put it, “I especially wouldn’t want to get my fingers burned later down the line if I hadn’t disclosed”.

Jonathan exemplifies the common feeling of obligation participants felt around discussing their condition at work.

Mel was one of the participants who targeted their job search on employers they felt supported disabled people. Like others who gained employment with that type of employer, she liked how understanding her colleagues were of her impairment; her job supported disabled people in some capacity, so most colleagues were quite familiar with her needs.

5 ‘Let’s Talk’ report by Scope (2017) <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-talk>

6 Contact theory says stereotypes or hostility between different groups can be improved with contact within certain conditions.

However, being open about an impairment or condition wasn't experienced the same way by all. For example, on Patrick's first day he adjusted his hearing aids for being in an office environment, and immediately started a conversation about his impairment with colleagues. While generally received positively, he felt people stopped listening to his support needs perhaps because there wasn't one term which encapsulated his conditions.

Some people were met with more curious reactions and colleagues who asked questions. In Michael's case, he appreciated questioning:

“Whether they're acting interested or not, that doesn't matter to me, at least they're asking. I'm more than happy to tell them.”

Michael

Interestingly, many participants felt colleagues would be able to help if their condition 'flared up'. Being open about their condition gave them confidence in dealing with such an occurrence, for example, colleagues could pick up on symptoms not obvious to the participant.

Emma discussed this aspect of being open, but also pointed out disabled people in this position will, by default, not have as much personal privacy as they would like:

“Obviously if I'm taken ill at work, they need to know what to do. If there's something I can't do, they need to know why. I suppose as well, you have to be open with them – there's not as much privacy.”

Emma

Disabled people who have conditions prone to flaring up will have less privacy than non-disabled people. Participants felt they would be more inclined in future roles to openly discuss their condition if previously being open had been received positively. In addition, this openness had the potential knock-on effect of promoting awareness and equality.

Reasonable adjustments and support

Some participants were reliant on support to efficiently carry out their roles and responsibilities. This led to yet another process that had to be gone through, creating additional work and highlighting the difference in equality they experienced. This led to participants feeling that they were burdening employers with their needs.

Some participants were unsure of the reasonable adjustments they were entitled to. They had never had a workplace assessment and employers had not made any suggestions. We found that only a minority of managers had encouraged staff to make their support needs known. Again, it fell to the participant to lead the way, with some managers assuming disabled people would already know exactly what adjustments they would need to support them and improve their equality in the workplace.

“When someone says, ‘What kind of problems are you going to face?’ it’s, sort of, deer in the headlights. I don’t know. I’m not going to say I won’t, but right now I’m not quite sure.”

Nichola

Some participants weren’t quite sure how to tell the difference between a ‘reasonable’ adjustment and an ‘adjustment request that would be rejected’⁷.

Workplaces which employed trained staff in identifying potential support needs, such as an occupational health team, were viewed more positively and as better enablers to a successful start than those without.

⁷ See below for more discussion, in ‘Reasonable or not?’

Common reasonable adjustments and key enablers

- 1 Specialist equipment** – Providing specialist equipment was received very positively by all, such as a laptop and headset to work from home when it suited the participant. This was particularly well received when it was available without delay and with technical support.
- 2 Flexible working patterns** – Accessible and flexible patterns were consistently seen as key enablers to successfully starting and maintaining a job. When participants had some control over their hours, there was a positive impact to their lives and subsequent health.

Emma, who felt equal to everyone else in her job in most areas, said, “they will send out shifts that are available via email. Then I can choose which shifts I would like to do... If I say to them, ‘Well, for medical reasons, I can only do one 12-hour shift a month,’ they are fine with that”.
- 3 Flexibility within the working day** – Helpful adjustments to activities or approach to the working day made a significant difference to disabled people, such as alternative ways to meet. If travelling to a meeting would have been too disruptive, often managers would move the physical location of the meeting venue or allow the participant to use conference calling to join and contribute. Some participants’ jobs called for meetings that lasted longer than two hours. This wasn’t feasible for everyone, so it was arranged that the participant could leave early or arrive late.
- 4 Accessible workspaces** – Such as the availability of disabled parking spaces – was a key enabler for those participants who drove to work. Reasonable adjustments weren’t always timely and often took between two and three months to be implemented. In one case, it took up to four months for the changes to happen.

6.

Access to Work

Access to Work is a government initiative to help disabled people overcome barriers to work. The scheme can pay for specialised equipment, travel, and other costs relating to starting and keeping a job.

Awareness of the scheme

Most participants in this study were already aware of the Access to Work scheme. Some participants found out about the scheme by accident, through finding out about it online, or via support groups. Other participants found out about it through a Disability Employment Advisor (DEA), or their employer. Some participants felt it could be better publicised:

“I have to say, I don’t think Access to Work is as well known as it should be.”

Jonathan

As with increasing awareness and understanding of disability rights within the workplace, participants often had to take the lead in ensuring Access to Work was understood, and the benefits of the scheme were being received.

Many employers were unaware of Access to Work, even though The Equality Act 2010 legally requires employers to provide support to their disabled employees and the scheme was set up for that purpose.

Due to the scheme having a low profile, some participants brought it up during interviews so employers would not be surprised by the prospect of paying for accessible equipment.

“I try and say in an interview, ‘I’m not going to cost you any money. Any equipment that you might need for me is paid for by the Government’.”

Jenny

Some participants had not used the scheme for fear of becoming a burden to their employer, but others believed they may use the scheme in the future.

Anne, for example, wanted to learn more about Access to Work, and said “it might be that I end up working for a small local charity or something like that who just wouldn’t be able to shell out for any kind of ambitious equipment”.

Most participants were grateful the scheme existed. Unfortunately, most who had used Access to Work reported negative experiences of the scheme.

Equipment delays

It often took up to three months after starting a job for equipment purchased through Access to Work to arrive. Because the Access to Work workplace assessment doesn’t happen until after the person has started the job, there is almost always a waiting period for the equipment to be ordered and delivered. Participants who needed assistive equipment often felt unproductive while waiting and disappointed at not being able to get off to the best start possible.

If employing disabled people with high support needs carries a high chance of low productivity within the first three months of starting a job, employers could potentially be put off employing disabled people.

Mel highlighted that she had to wait three weeks from her assessment to receive equipment. During that time, work was a struggle. Her employer happened to have a screen reader which helped, but Mel really needed a Braille display. The employer having a screen reader was pure coincidence, and if they hadn’t, Mel would have been “sitting around doing nothing” for three weeks in a small business that “had gone out on a limb” to employ a disabled person.



In Marie-Claire's case, she was waiting for equipment for a quarter of her contract, which affected her confidence. "I was on a 12 month contract, and it was 12 weeks before my equipment was in place, and I just think that that, it really, really knocks your confidence". Marie-Claire had a very supportive manager and said, "my boss was absolutely fantastic and she fought my corner with Access to Work". This improved a negative experience, and it was helpful that Marie-Claire's manager understood and acted on issues that were clearly not Marie-Claire's fault.

Equipment maintenance was also an issue and some participants felt they were expected to sort out equipment problems by themselves. At Marie-Claire's previous job, she had some equipment supplied by Access to Work which stopped functioning. The employer's IT department had to repair the equipment, but took a long time to do so, putting strain on Marie-Claire to perform without adequate support. This led to more stress, as Marie-Claire worried she would potentially be viewed as under-performing.

Moving between employers

The experience of our participants shows moving between employers while relying on Access to Work funding is problematic. Participants criticised the need for new claims to be made when starting with a new employer, as it led to a waste of time and a lack of continuous support. As assistive equipment was not moved between employers there was a concern about wasting money, as required equipment was always left at the previous employer and purchased again by the new employer.

There were differences in how employers handled Access to Work claims, as there was no clear process for everyone to follow.

Because most employers are unfamiliar with the scheme and don't know how to practically manage a claim, participants sometimes had to explain their needs to multiple staff or managers, and their documentation was shared more widely than it needed to be:

"Because it's health related... it's very much like I have to explain it to everybody... It just feels like more people need to be involved than is necessary."

Jenny

Access to Work Staff

Dealing with different Access to Work staff who were unfamiliar with the participant's claim proved to be difficult to deal with. It was difficult to get to speak to the same person across multiple calls and emails for the same, sometimes complex, claim:

“It’s a different person every time. An absolutely different person every time... [and] then that person mysteriously goes off on leave or vanishes and never replies. They must have a super high turnover.”

Rosie

The participants had most contact with Access to Work over the phone or by email, usually never seeing their advisor, and only seeing staff during their workplace assessment.

Due to previous negative experiences, participants doubted the knowledge and expertise of assessors and weren't always convinced the assessors were best positioned to make the technical and detailed judgements they were called to make. Because assessors had to deal with a range of impairments and conditions, many participants felt Access to Work usually opted for an unsatisfactory, one-size-fits-all approach, leaving many participants critical of the assessors.

“They’re all multi-disability, which works in some cases, I’m sure, but their answer to everything seems to be, ‘We’ll give you a big monitor.’ They wanted to give me dictation software as part of my assessment and I said, ‘I can touch type.’ They almost seemed to have a standard, ‘This is a visually impaired person, this is what I’m going to suggest for them’... I think maybe a little bit more training for some of the Access to Work advisors.”

Marie-Claire

Enabling a successful start

Only one participant, Rachel, spoke about a very positive experience with the Access to Work scheme. She had an advisor who contacted different equipment manufacturers to establish an average quote for equipment, rather than making Rachel do the running around. All disabled people should receive this level of service.

Rachel described the advisor as “very passionate about what she was doing. She seemed to actually relish the chance to help somebody”. Once again, receiving a personalised experience from someone who genuinely seemed concerned led to a successful start in a new job. As standard, all disabled people should receive this level of service.

Reasonable or not?

Access to Work assessors and employers sometimes had different opinions of the support needs of the disabled person. Sometimes there were disagreements about whether an adjustment or piece of equipment was actually necessary. Major causes for concern were:

- **Ignoring recommendations** – asking disabled people which adjustments or equipment they need can be problematic, especially when the cost was high, even when backed up by ‘experts’. In Jenny’s case, Access to Work suggested a lift was implemented on site to provide access due to Jenny’s physical impairment. The employer felt it was too much and not a reasonable adjustment.
- **Insufficient support costs** – sometimes Access to Work would not cover costs participants felt were necessary, such as those covering support workers or equipment.
- **Lengthy appeal process** – participants found going through the appeal process time consuming. This could mean disabled people are put off appealing and may sometimes have to go without the support they require.
- **Balancing burdens with equality** – participants were putting off asking for certain support as they were conscious that their employer may need to make a financial contribution through Access to Work. Some participants, like Nikki, felt guilty and like “a burden to the employer”.
- **Not delivering on promised support** – unfortunately, some employers agreed to reasonable adjustments when the employee started but did not stick to their original agreement. For example, occupational health wrote a report saying Ellen could only work between 9am and 7pm. In practice, her managers got her to work outside those hours.

Nichola described the process of getting reasonable adjustments based on her experience:

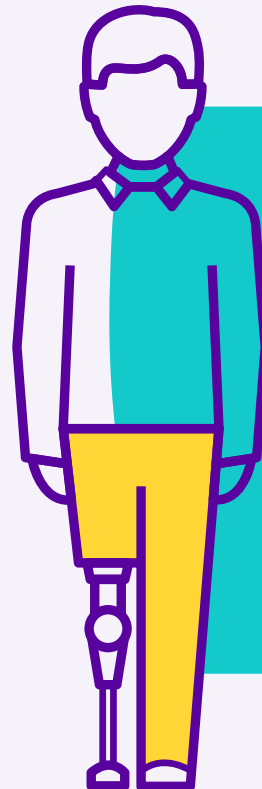
“[My employer said] ‘You can have a special chair for your back if you want to,’ which I have so far refused, partly because I don’t want to put them to the trouble, which is silly... there’s the practicality versus the theory, and the theory is that you should be able to ask for all the adjustments you need. The practicality is, favour one is, ‘Yes, sure. No, that’s great’. Favour two is, ‘Oh, okay, another one? Alright really’. Favour three is, ‘Really? You’re asking for more?’.”

Nichola

Medical model language

When discussing support needs, it was noticeable how often participants used medical model language⁸. This is true even with participants who clearly subscribed to the social model. This was clearest when participants were discussing their experiences addressing support needs during application, interview, or while in work.

Many participants felt obliged to ‘disclose’ their impairment or condition. Participants would sometimes say they have something ‘wrong’ with them. This is not particularly surprising given participants are living in a society whose discourse is still largely based on the medical model of disability.



⁸ The medical model of disability presents people as disabled by their impairments or differences. This model places the responsibility on the individual. For more information, please see: <https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability>

7.

Attitudes in work

Managers

Previous bad experiences of senior staff in the workplace have led participants to describe some managers as “abysmal” or “vile”, and generally not approachable, understanding or supportive. Thankfully, most current managers are reported as being a vast improvement.

Perhaps warning signs of bad employers have steered participants away from unsupportive organisations. Or more cynically, since most jobs have started within the past year, it may be that not enough time has passed for the employee to face problems yet. Overall, most people recounted positive experiences in current jobs.

Supportive management

Fortunately, only a minority of participants had negative experiences with their current managers. A few people said their managers did not listen to their needs or were not pleased about making further adjustments. Some employers may have felt they were inclusive by employing disabled people, but in practice they had not developed accessible and equal workplaces.

“I think they look in horror when I say anything about disability and about amenities and changing things.”

Nicki

Reassuringly however, participants were very complimentary about the majority of current managers, describing them as “really good”, “approachable and friendly”, and often very positive and “supportive from day one”.



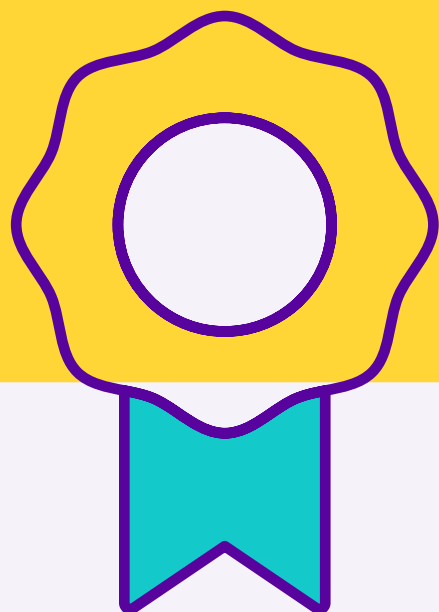
The types of managers who were consistently praised as providing a successful start to a new job were those who:

- **embraced reasonable adjustments**, such as accessible working schedules and working from home
- **fought the participants' corner**, such as support during Access to Work complications, long-time delays getting equipment, and being supportive of recommendations made by occupational health
- were clearly **approachable, understanding, and open to suggestions**
- **thought of practical solutions** when faced with issues such as access and making adjustments to provide equality. This especially is a change from the focus usually being on the disabled person to figure out solutions.

Managers were a crucial part of a participant feeling they were off to a successful start in a new job. As described by Emma and Michael, "I've been amazed by their attitude towards my disability, and I've never had it like that before" (Emma) and "[my manager's] always, like, 'If you need to talk or anything, you know, we can talk about things'" (Michael). Without his manager being as supportive, Michael believed his work-life balance would have been troublesome. "If I didn't have that support it would just feel a lot harder, it would feel really hard every day and it would just make me feel unhappy about work".

"I've been amazed by their attitude towards my disability, and I've never had it like that before."

Emma



Colleagues

Colleagues were a crucial component to a participant feeling they were off to a successful start in a new job.

Most of our participants' experiences of work colleagues were mixed, but generally positive. There were some negative comments and scepticism around participant's conditions, for example comments from colleagues like, "we don't know what's wrong with him" as highlighted by Jonathan.

Attitudes were often consistently positive across colleagues and the general culture of organisations felt inclusive. In fact, some participants felt demonstrations of inequality or discrimination simply would not have been tolerated in their workplace. This made participants feel at ease and helped remove any anxiety, particularly for people whose conditions flared up.

Many participants were very complimentary about their colleagues, describing them as "great" and "absolutely fantastic", and as Rachel states, colleague attitudes are "definitely the most positive thing that I encounter".

Key observations of work colleagues and their attitudes were highlighted by participants:

Working with others

- Participants often experienced two extremes when working with others in their workplace. Either their colleagues expected too much from them (such as when adequate support needs were not in place), or they limited their expectations of the disabled person based on their personal judgement of ability (for example insisting on carrying things after incorrectly thinking that they could not manage alone). This is because not enough time is taken to understand the disabled person's needs.
- Colleagues who judged the participant on their own merit, without focusing on their impairment or condition, enabled the participant to have a successful start. Claire said, "They just, sort of, accept me for who I am" which she welcomed. Rachel described colleagues in her workplace in a similar way, "everybody is taken on their own merit rather than being judged by anything else, which I think is really quite progressive and quite unusual".

Discussing their impairments

- When participants had positive experiences discussing their condition with colleagues, this made them more likely to do so in future roles. This would result in an overall increase in awareness and understanding of disability in the workplace.
- Participants found it beneficial when they did not need to explain their impairment or condition more than once. Anne described her colleague “has absorbed it and takes it into account and I’m really quite taken with that”.
- Many participants found their colleagues willing to share workloads or swap tasks depending on their needs. Participants felt this was helped by being open in discussing their impairment or condition within the workplace. For example, Michael described his colleagues as understanding of autism which helped him experience a successful start.

Accessibility and support

- Participants consistently noted small but significant changes colleagues would make which had a positive impact on their working life. For example, Rosie felt comfortable when colleagues offered to accompany her on the most accessible route to a meeting room, even if it was different from the quickest route. She said, “it’s super helpful to have someone not making a big deal out of going with you via a completely different route than everyone else is going. So, that’s really good”. Other examples included being understanding of changes to venues, such as meeting locations.
- Colleagues coming up with ideas or suggestions to help make life easier for the participant starting a new job was also extremely positive. Our participants consistently reported managers who were proactive and creative in developing an inclusive workplace increased their positive experiences.

Some participants formed friendships with colleagues that continued outside the workplace. For some, people they met in work became close and trusted friends.

Most participants said socialising with colleagues usually took place in bars. This was a barrier for some participants, either because they do not drink alcohol or found it tough to deal with busy or loud venues.

Many participants did not feel comfortable suggesting changing venues from bars to other activities, as they felt they would be ignored or alienate themselves from the group. Rachel said, “a lot of the social activities that are organised through work are organised in places where they don’t think about wheelchair access at all”. When thinking of somewhere more accessible, Rosie suggested, “there’s a coffee shop, but no one wants to go to the coffee shop”.

8.

Financial security

Most participants wanted to work to earn money and improve their financial security. This was particularly pertinent in the context of extra cost and worries about reassessments of their Personal Independent Payment (PIP). Earning money has given most participants more disposable income and the freedom to do more things.

Regaining control and independence

Participants had more financial independence by having a job. Being able to make choices based on what the participant wanted, rather than being restricted and reliant on benefits, had a positive impact. Claire said, “I don’t like someone controlling my flipping money and I don’t like someone controlling how much I can save. That’s been the big thing”. This highlights how frustrating being financially dependent on benefits is, and why gaining employment was so important. Financial independence drove a lot of ‘living the life they choose’ choices.

Increased purchasing power

Having more means you can do more, for example, saving to buy a car, or getting fit through gym membership. Mushtaq summed up how many participants felt:

**“I’ve got more goals and I’m able to do more things ...
When you’re working, you’re in control of how much
money you earn, and what you do with your money.”**

Mushtaq



Extra costs

While many additional extra costs were identified during interviews, this report only focuses on those that are work-related. Although not experienced by all, many participants highlighted how extra costs had a significant impact on them and their ability to achieve the standard of living they desired.

While Access to Work might help with some additional work-related costs such as travel or specialist equipment, many participants covered them themselves, so not to bother their employer. This is summed up by Nikki's decision not to apply for funding support as she thought her employer, "wouldn't be able to provide any money towards Access to Work". This situation financially burdened disabled people further.

Only a few participants felt they did not experience any financial pressure due to gaining employment. This was largely because they were able to fit their new job into their lives, or were able to avoid any additional financial strain by getting support from friends, partners, family, and support services. For example, using friends and family to take on childcare responsibilities which otherwise would have been very expensive.

Transport

Some participants with physical impairments or conditions experienced extra costs, as their physical activity increased with a new job.

For example, Nicki had to buy a lighter wheelchair to make it easier to get in and out of her car, as she now regularly travels for work. Similarly, since Jenny started working, she had to buy a new mobility scooter which costed around £3,000. Unfortunately, Motability did not help with the extra cost as she already had a car, although Jenny strongly felt she needed both, so the cost to her was unavoidable.

Some participants who travelled a lot during work found not all petrol costs could be expensed for internal reasons, creating a further cost to the participant.



Clothing

Some participants had to cover extra clothing costs, such as gloves and shoes due to more wear and tear. Clothing had to be both comfortable and appropriate for work, with some participants highlighting their additional extra costs for clothing.

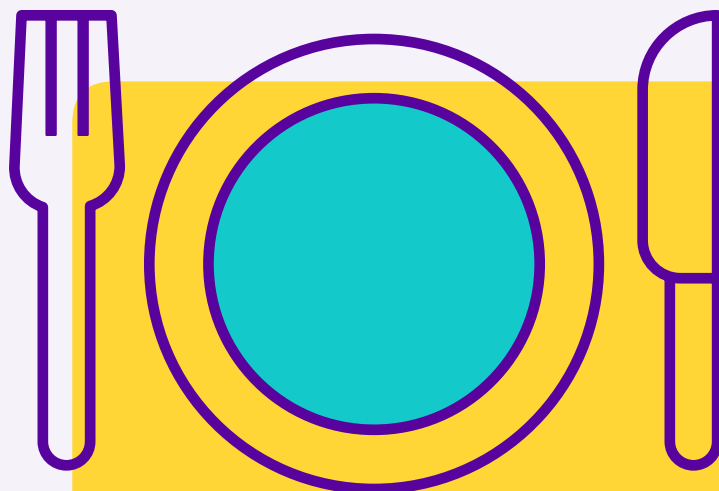
“Clothing that is accessible and I can wear comfortably for work, which is usually fairly specialist and can be a bit tricky to access sometimes [but is] essential.”

Rachel

Food

Food for lunches at work were a common extra cost experienced mostly by those with physical impairments or conditions. The participants had to buy, for example, pre-chopped vegetables, pre-made sandwiches, and ready meals, which were more expensive.

Nichola, for example, cannot prepare a lot of food, and said, “it’s not fun trying to make sandwiches when you can’t really hold the bread and spread very well”. This restricted her options, so she was limited to purchasing her work lunch meals, unlike non-disabled colleagues.



9.

Living the life
they choose

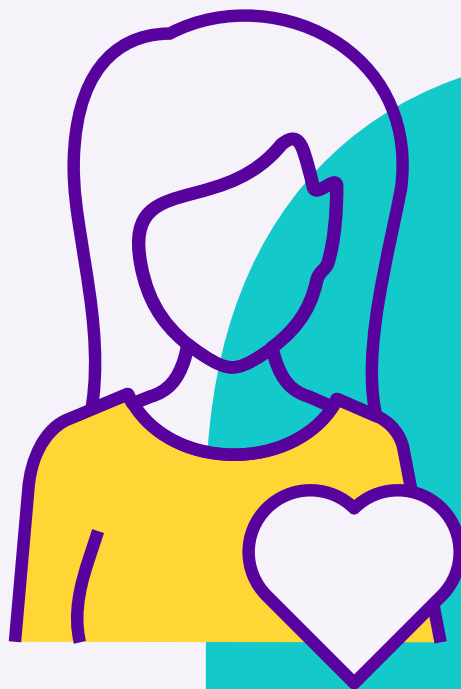
Participants felt work provided a range of benefits across different areas of their lives.

Most participants felt being in work brought with it a lot of positives, beyond having more money. Claire summed up the impact of working. “[Working] brought back a little spark of me, you know, yes, it’s been great. It’s got me out, it’s got me out of my sort of little comfort bubble. I haven’t got a comfort zone, I’ve got a bubble. Yes, it’s been great”. Working boosted confidence and enabled a greater feeling of self-worth amongst many participants.

Working had a positive impact on many of the participants’ mental and physical health. Jenny, for example, had support from friends she met through work while moving to a new house. Jenny is “in a place now where my health is a lot better than it has been, probably because of my job”. Many participants reported they were keen to work more hours than were available.

“[Working] brought back a little spark in me, it’s been great. It’s got me out, it’s got me out of my sort of little comfort bubble. I haven’t got a comfort zone, I’ve got a bubble. Yes, it’s been great.”

Claire



Aspirations

When looking to the future, participants had a range of aspirations. While we do not have a comparison group, there are signs that aspirations are tempered and less ambitious than they might be. Positive outcomes are often focussed on staying in employment, or helping others, rather than personal career progression. This may be due to past experiences of finding it hard to stay in work, and the inequalities they have experienced in life.

Other examples of aspirations were:

- Some participants were happy in their current positions and aspired to continue working there. Summed up by Sophie: “Really, I just want to still be employed in five years”. A few participants were worried about their ability to stay in their job under the current conditions.
- Many participants already had jobs supporting disabled people or would love to find a job in a similar line of work. Rosie would like to “find a way to help people better than we’re already helping people”, particularly focusing on disabled people with physical conditions.
- Some participants also wanted to continue to progress their training and build their careers.

“I’d love to find a job [and think], ‘Ah, this is good – this is right for me’.”

Patrick



Appendix

Methodology and sampling

Year 1 interview journey

The first year interviews were split into two parts.

Firstly, participants prepared timelines for themselves and their children. Timelines covered key life journey highs and lows, as well as aspirations for the future. Timelines were used in a telephone interview as a tool to help the researchers better understand important life moments from the participant's perspective.

The participants also took part in an in-depth interview held at their home. Participants answered semi-structured questions based on their transition, covering topics on 'financial security' and 'living the life I choose'. Pre-designed stimulus material was also used to support participants:

- to evaluate their equality and inequality experiences on 'living the life I choose' issues
- to recall, unprompted and prompted, issues seeking and being in work
- to recall, unprompted and prompted, all the extra disability related costs their family pays for
- to draw an overall satisfaction timeline – past, present and future – on their most important equality issue.

Interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Transcriptions were coded line by line and thematically analysed.

Sample breakdown

Recruitment of participants were predominantly through online advertising. Participants were selected to give a broad range of experiences and demographic characteristics. The sample breakdown is shown opposite:

Total participants	21
Age	
20–21	1
22–24	2
25–29	6
30–39	5
40–49	4
50–59	3
Gender	
Female	12
Male	9
Location	
North	3
Central	7
South	10
Wales	1
Ethnicity	
White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	18
Asian or Asian British	2
White Other	1
Disability	
Acquired – last five years	2
Acquired – more than five years	9
Born disabled	10
Contract	
Permanent	13
Temporary	8
Full-time	6
Part-time	15
Sector	
Private	5
Public	11
Charity or not-for-profit	5



We're Scope, the disability equality charity. We won't stop until we achieve a society where all disabled people enjoy equality and fairness. At home. At school. At work. In our communities.

We provide practical advice and emotional support to disabled people and their families whenever they need it most.

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