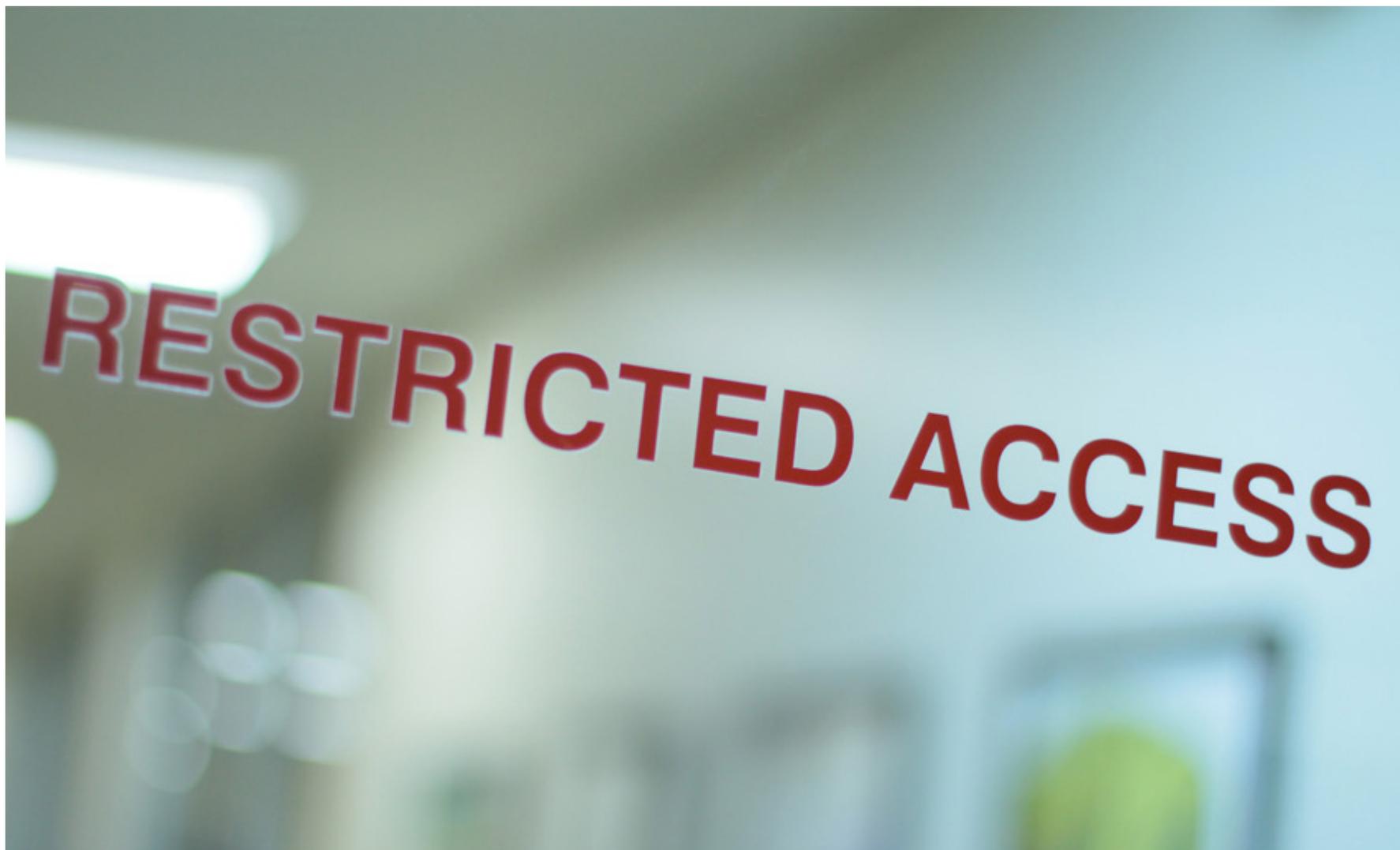


# Opening the Glass Door



A Discussion Paper on  
Disability; Employment  
& the Economy

# Introduction

The title of this discussion paper, *“Opening the Glass Door”*, pays homage to the previously detectable yet invisible ceiling that often affects the careers of women in the workplace.

To its credit, much work has been undertaken to close the equality gap between women and their male peers in terms of earnings (although there’s still significant progress to be made in this area).

We have witnessed initiatives such as Gender Pay Gap reporting and significant settlements across Scottish local authority councils for historic pay inequalities.

The Scottish Parliament leads the nation with a gender balanced Cabinet with 3 of the 5 political parties led by females and the Scottish Government’s Programme for 2016-’17 including the *“Gender Balance on Public Boards Bill”*.

I have therefore borrowed the analogy in the hope that it will be equally successful in starting to raise awareness of and then driving action to closing the equality gap between disabled and non-disabled peers in the context of employment.

Whilst a glass ceiling was seen as an invisible barrier preventing women progressing into senior and strategic roles in organisations, that same barrier is more often found at the entrance of a company or a social organisation or movement if you have a disability.

For the purposes of this paper, we use the definition of disability found in the Equality Act 2010, *“You are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.”*

The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government do much to fully consult and engage with disabled people across Scotland and this is both welcomed and recognised but, as our desktop research suggests, a lack of visible, prominent disabled role models and more wholesome, evidence led debate and discussion is required across business, politics and civic society to advance the full integration and equality of disabled people in the 21st century.

Compiling global research and authoring what I hope will become a seminal paper on disability, employment and the economy, *“Opening the Glass Door”*, is challenging.

I anticipate that some may view this discussion paper as an extension of the recent march of U.K. Government to re-design and reform the social contract between disabled people and the welfare state. This is categorically not the case and neither I, nor SPAEN, has any political affiliation or preference.

Instead, the impetus for writing this discussion paper has been the pursuit of something much more universal - "equality".

In searching for equality, I make the assumption that disabled people want the same as non-disabled peers; opportunity, purpose; pleasure; parity of esteem and autonomy. And the heart of much of this is meaningful activity such as work; volunteering and / or social interaction and inclusion.

SPAEN, as a charity, is firmly rooted in the Independent Living Movement (and has, for a number of years now, argued that we should be moving to an "interdependent" living model), a social movement that upholds the rights of people with disabilities to make decisions, choices and determinations for themselves.

*"Independent Living does not mean that we want to do everything by ourselves, do not need anybody or like to live in isolation. Independent Living means that we demand the same choices and control in our every-day lives that our non-disabled brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends take for granted. We want to grow up in our families, go to the neighbourhood school, use the same bus as our neighbours, work in jobs that are in line with our education and interests, and raise families of our own. We are profoundly ordinary people sharing the same need to feel included, recognized and loved.[\[1\]](#)"*

The founding purpose of the independent living movement was equality between disabled and non-disabled peers, equality in every sense and in every aspect.

I believe that a new model is required for 21st century living, a model that recognises "interdependence", where we are equally dependent on each other and that the choices, systems and decisions we make and implement affect each and every one of us.

It is therefore crucial that we make informed decisions and develop policies and practices that promote and embed equality in all aspects of life, hence the topic of this paper - "Disability, Employment and the Economy".

An interdependent model recognises that the economy and overall prosperity of Scotland is not only affected by macro-economic policies and the globalisation of markets but that we must also look at, with similar attention and diligence, the micro-economies of our communities.

Communities are, essentially, enriched by the individuals within them but also de-valued by the exclusion of individuals who occupy them.

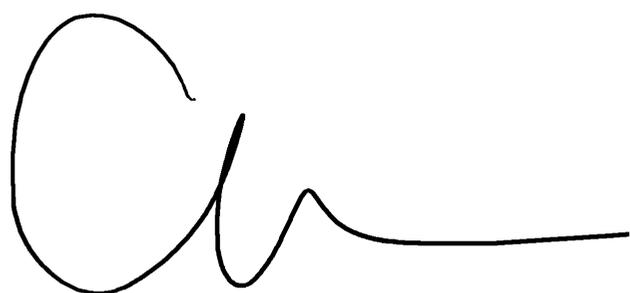
For absolute clarity, it is not my position nor the position of SPAEN that every or any disabled person should be required; expected; cajoled or pressured into either seeking or obtaining employment or even volunteering activity.

What we are advocating is an “asset” based approach - what can people do and how do we enable them to fulfil their potential. That way we can dare to aspire and then move toward reaching their individual and collective goals and objectives and become fully integrated, recognised and valued citizens.

How do we, as a society promote equality of opportunity and meaningful participation.

To that end, we must address the gap between the aspirations and abilities of disabled people who wish to work and the opportunity, or lack thereof, they are afforded.

The paper does not seek to provide answers or solutions. It is intended to inspire a much wider discussion and further research to inform the future policies and delivery of supports and services to ensure that we recognise the role; the aspirations and latent talent amongst those with disabilities and the value that *“Opening the Glass Door”* and achieving true equality will have for Scottish society as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a smaller 'M' and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Colin Millar  
Chief Executive Officer

# Disability & Society

According to the most recent Department of Work & Pensions statistical release, there are currently over 11 million people with a limiting long-term illness, impairment or disability living in the U.K.

It further estimates that some 16% of the working age population of the U.K. are “*disabled*”.

The number of disabled persons who were in employment in 2012 was 46.3% compared to an employment rate of 76.4% of non-disabled working age persons, giving an employment gap of 30.1% or some 2,000,000 plus disabled people who could work but are currently unemployed.

The economic benefits of “Opening the Glass Door” are obvious.

As more disabled people are able to attain employment, they are better able to provide for themselves, their contribution to the tax take increases and therefore the tax base becomes much wider.

Available financial resources can then be re-allocated and whilst such re-distribution would be a matter for Government at U.K. or devolved Parliament level, the case for shifting these additional resources to “preventative<sup>[2]</sup>” spend should be fully explored.

In order to achieve increased employment, a “whole system” approach will also need to be considered.

This includes:

- the modification of transport infrastructure to ensure people with additional mobility requirements are enabled to benefit from the positive affects of employment;
- that employers are not only required to comply with Disability Discrimination legislation but are better informed and supported to make adjustments to both the physical workplace and also the distribution and allocation of meaningful work;
- that their workforce is supported to make these adjustments and integration into the workforce a real and positive experience for all;

- that the existing benefits system evolves to make it financially viable for disabled people to make the transition to employment at a pace that gives due cognisance to their needs and any fluctuations in their well-being or ability; and
- that people are not penalised or perceive to be penalised where the attainment of ongoing employment is neither practical nor optimal for either or both parties.

This may require a fundamental shift in culture and practice for a whole range of bodies and regimes such as JobCentre Plus which is currently compelled to operate through “Payment By Results” in relation to employment schemes.

It may also require the re-defining of what a “positive destination” is for a person with a disability or multiple disabilities including those persons with fluctuating conditions.

And it could require a radical alteration to the existing benefits scheme which often operates as a “financial cliff edge”, requiring claimants to attain a certain minimum number of hours per week in paid employment before this is considered a “positive outcome”.

This may hinder the efforts and endeavours of the JobCentre Plus, the employer and the disabled person and may result in an otherwise positive experience being considered a “failure” when measured against the pre-defined target.

SPAEN would also advocate a policy of “no detriment” be deployed.

Whilst the Access to Work Scheme currently provides both financial and non-financial assistance to employers to make “*reasonable adjustments*”, careful analysis and modelling should be undertaken to ensure this support is sufficient and covers all costs, including directly attributable costs for adjustments and training required across the wider workforce to assist and enable safe integration of new staff with additional needs or disabilities.

The disabled person should suffer no detriment in engaging with any employment or employability scheme including where they are not immediately or ultimately able to meet the lower threshold of working 16 hours or more per week.

The existing benefits system (including Employment Support Allowance or ESA) could also offer a staggered approach to benefits reduction with a review of the current “permissible earnings” (where someone claiming ESA can work up to 16 hours per week and / or earn £115.50 per week over 52 weeks) which sees a pro-rata reduction to the level of financial assistance they are eligible for.

Meaningful volunteering may also provide a safe, secure step into up-skilling and / or preparing for work and this should be considered as a “positive destination” in relevant circumstances, recognising the wider benefits to both the individual and society in line with the values and principles of independent living.

And it's not just changing the link between benefits and work that requires addressing. Under the Social Care (Self-directed Support)(Scotland) Act 2014 (commonly referred to as SDS), persons with support requirements have a range of options on how to best meet their agreed outcomes.

SPAEN has been aware of some supported persons who have had their SDS supports "re-assessed" and reduced as a result of increased socialisation or social based activity, including volunteering.

The reduction of financial supports that allow disabled persons to volunteer may meet an immediate need facing local authority councils in terms of reducing financial outlay in the short-term but may result in greater expenditure in the medium to long-term and runs counter to a "preventative strategy".

A joined up system whereby welfare and social care budgets are combined and are fluid may present greater opportunity to re-allocate financial resource based on the activity being supported with a long-term strategic view of supporting disabled people to fully integrate and participate in civic society.

The positive narrative will also need to be presented to civic society to ensure comprehensive understanding of the need for progressive policies and adaptations to existing schemes and the wider, long-term benefits this is likely to bring for all.

With the transfer of Welfare powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Health & Social Care powers already under the direction of Scottish Ministers, this may represent an opportune moment to consider and construct how a more person-centric model could achieve the aims of full inclusion and participation for disabled people as well as providing much needed financial and non-financial supports for those unable to participate in work or volunteering.

Research by Metts (2000) suggests the cost of integrating accessibility into new buildings and infrastructure represents less than 1% of the capital development cost.

Clearly the retrofitting of existing buildings and infrastructure will be much more expensive however Scottish society should not look at such endeavours only through the paradigm of increased access for "disabled" people.

Scotland has an ageing demographic and with this comes issues around decreased mobility.

Such investment prolongs the usefulness and accessibility of buildings and infrastructure for the whole population and may result in decreased costs in other areas of Government expenditure such as health issues related to social isolation.

This is another area where significant advances have been made in Scottish society but many disabled peoples' organisations continue to report the negative experiences of those they represent in relation to accessing public services.

The economic benefits of tackling social and workforce exclusion may well be under-represented or under-analysed and not fully understood.

A study conducted for the European Parliament [\[3\]](#) reports that mental ill-health now accounts for one third of all new disability benefit claims across the EU, with young people representing the fastest age group claiming disability benefits and mental ill-health accounting for two thirds of the people under the age of 35 years on disability benefit schemes.

The same study found that less than 2% of people on disability benefit schemes re-enter the labour market.

Such trends potentially pose significant issues for the U.K. and Scottish economy as a whole.

As explored later in this paper, disabled people are more likely to live in relative poverty and this alone represents a compelling case for Scottish society to look introspectively and to decide whether this is reflective of our culture and national values and adequately represents the value we attribute to disabled people and their role and place in society.

# Disability & Education

The Social Research report (2013) [4] recorded that disabled people in Scotland report transport, attitudes of others and health conditions as barriers to learning.

People with additional support needs (2009 / 2010) were less likely to enter a “positive destination” on leaving school than peers with no additional support needs or disabilities.

The report also found that there were proportionately more disabled people in Further Education than Higher Education, they are less likely to have a degree and more likely to have no qualifications than non-disabled peers but are *“just as likely to do as well as students without disabilities”*.

An international study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also found that disabled young people leave school earlier than non-disabled peers and that they are doing so earlier than previous generations.

The study concluded that this puts disabled students at an immediate disadvantage in the jobs market.

The links between education, attainment, deprivation and poverty are already understood but this is further affirmed in a report by the Scottish Human Rights Commission [5] (2016) where it found *“material deprivation”* has increased in recent years across Scotland with *“disabled people, ethnic minorities and women most significantly affected”*.

With Welfare to Work reforms at U.K. level and the established causal link between educational attainment and poverty, ensuring equality for disabled people in all levels of education would seem to provide a solid foundation and excellent starting point for the recalibration of society.

An educational programme that encourages integration at every opportunity may assist in the eradication of prejudices that prevent disabled people from entering the job market or attaining promotions in later life.

Such changes should be radical and not “tokenistic” however as this will not further the cause of independent living as explored in Disability & Employment.

The scheme should involve real opportunities to enter into mainstream employment with real prospects of developing new skills; increasing individual and wider workforce ability

and increasing the employability of the individuals on the scheme in the general jobs market where at all possible.

When surveyed at the age of 16, disabled and non-disabled peers reported similar aspirations in relation to future career roles and earnings.

By the age of 26, disabled persons are four times more likely to be unemployed.

Research by the Resolution Foundation reports that after being unemployed for one year, a disabled worker's odds of returning to the workforce plummet to just 2.4% finding work each quarter.

In its report of 2009, the Academic Network of European Disability Experts states that:

*“It is recognised that education has a significant influence on the social and economic lives of PwD’s (persons with disabilities), in particular for their future, employment and integration into the labour market. Exclusion, poverty and disability are linked and education is widely recognised as a means to develop human capital, to improve economic performance and to enhance people’s skills and choices.”*

It would therefore make sense to bring the educational and employment sectors together to co-design and co-deliver training and education programmes for disabled people, as with the wider educational curricula, with a clear path from education to practical application of learned skills in the workplace or “positive destination”.

This could be something that is also integrated into the Welfare system to ensure maximum security and flexibility for all parties involved.

# Disability & Employment

As outlined in the introduction of this paper, the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled peers is at circa 30% and has remained relatively unchanged for a significant period of time.

The disability employment gap in the U.K. remains stubbornly higher than some other EU countries such as Sweden (9.5% employment gap) [6].

In 2010, the EU-wide employment rate for disabled people was reported as being approximately 20% lower than the rate for non-disabled persons [7], some 10% lower than the prevailing U.K. rate.

A Harvard University study of prejudice found that disability, followed by age, was the top reason for employers discriminating against candidates.

A common theme running through much of the research we surveyed as part of this exercise also pointed to the “attitudes” of employers as being a significant barrier to employment or promotion within employment.

Ironically, many of the perceptions and prejudices of potential employers are not only unfounded but are diametrically wrong.

Rather than costing employers additional time, money and opportunity, employing disabled people as part of their wider, inclusive workforce can actually add to their company’s financial performance.

Starbucks, the global coffee chain, is one such company and Scott Pitasky, Executive Vice-President and Chief Partner Resources Officer for the company, recently explained to the Huffington Post:

*“When we think about hiring for Starbucks, we think beyond labels. We challenge our selves to look beyond traditional sources and typical profiles to bring in people that share our values and our passion for service and community. There is no better example than hiring people with disabilities. These talented professionals bring unique experiences that foster innovation and new ideas while contributing to a culture of warmth and true inclusion. We work across multiple business teams to collaborate and inspire partners (employees) to embrace accessibility as a global value of Starbucks and we are continually inspired by the diversity and inclusion of our people.”*

Innovation is one of the many positive attributes that leading employers with integration high on their agenda cite.

And it should come as little surprise.

People with disabilities are faced with significant and multiple barriers in almost every aspect of life and it is through resourcefulness; resilience and often sheer determination that they are able to overcome these barriers.

Northrop Grumman [8] is another employer who has learned to value diversity and inclusion.

*“Northrop Grumman is committed to creating a work environment that values diversity and inclusion because it creates innovation, improves productivity and boosts profitability. We actively seek to hire disabled employees because of the tremendous value they bring to the workplace.”*

These are examples coming from Fortune 1000 companies.

Ernst & Young, a global leader in professional services was built by a founder with a disability and their commitment to disability inclusion continues.

*“Ernst & Young seeks the best talent pool - period. To find the specialised skills we need, we have to tap the broadest available talent pools, including people with a wide range of physical, cognitive and mental health abilities. We know that diverse teams produce better solutions so there’s a clear performance advantage to bring people together with all kinds of differences in gender, ethnicity, orientation, age, background and abilities.*

*Employees with disabilities have higher retention rates, so for many businesses, there can be a real cost saving through reduced turnover.*

*Research has found that organisations employing people with disabilities have higher morale and employee engagement which we know drives profitability.”*[9]

A study by the U.S. Business Leadership Network concluded that *“businesses that embrace disability inclusion have found a positive correlation between their profitability, employee morale and engagement. These businesses report lower turnover, better safety records, innovation and higher productivity among their employees with disabilities.”*

The business benefits of an inclusive approach to employment are not isolated to the U.S.A. either.

Closer to home, Lloyds Banking Group reported that dealing positively, openly and proactively with issues around disability led to reduced sickness absence and improved productivity.

An open, honest and supportive culture will bring out the best in people and will naturally maximise their abilities, something that every business; every leader and every manager should be seeking to achieve as an integral part of what they do regardless of whether they are managing disabled or non-disabled workers.

A report of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), edited by Karen Needels and Robert Schmitz, also reported employers citing access to a wider pool of skills and talent; improved morale and better retention rates.

A survey by the DWP in 2005 [10] found the top 3 benefits reported by employers who embraced inclusive recruitment and retention of disabled people was:

- Increased retention;
- Image of the organisation;
- Staff relations and morale.

Other benefits and attributes included disabled employees being highly committed and motivated, punctual and exhibiting lower rates of absenteeism.

Yet, once in employment, disabled people often face further adversity.

The average earnings for a disabled person is around 11% lower than their non-disabled peer. Based on full-time equivalent earnings, this results in disabled people being paid, on average, around £2,400.00 per annum less than their non-disabled peers.

Disabled people are also far less likely to be promoted within the workplace [11], a reflection of the lack of understanding of disability or, more importantly, the skill to recognise and nurture ability, in line managers.

In “State of the Nation” [12], more than half of all public and private sector employers reported a lack of “*skilled, confident line managers*” as one of the main barriers to retaining and developing disabled employees.

In the same report, one in three employers cited a lack of targeted development of disabled employees.

One issue that repeatedly appeared in the research articles was the lack of a “disabled role model” within organisations.

Peer support schemes were considered a useful and valuable enabler for disabled people entering the workforce but SPAEN would add a significant caveat to this in that the creation and placement of disabled people in circumstances and contexts where either the majority or the entirety of the workforce is disabled, whilst aiding the disabled person to obtain employment, does not necessitate the cultural and paradigm shift that is required of mainstream employers and society in general and this should, therefore, be used as a means to up-skilling or preparing for mainstream employment where this is an achievable and viable end goal.

Supported employment should act as a stepping stone to mainstream employment and not represent a final destination in and of itself.

Finally, it was interesting to note that in the Annual Population Survey (2010), 68% of employed disabled people in Scotland worked in the private sector and only 32% worked in the public sector.

The instance of disabled people being “self-employed” was also greater than their non-disabled peers with 14% of working age disabled people reporting to be self-employed as compared 11% of their peers.

This may or may not be directly related to the barriers disabled people encounter when trying to access mainstream jobs but may also be a good indication that disabled people are both motivated to be financially self-sustaining and innovative but are also affected by lower levels of income and the associated disbenefits.

What should remain at the very heart of any system or policy change is the fundamental principle that the “*right to work*” is a right that is enshrined in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; as is the right to equal pay for equal work.

The way we work and the nature of the work we undertake in Scotland and the U.K. is changing and with this shift, new opportunities present themselves.

Remote and secure technologies; open and online collaboration; flexible office and meeting spaces; connective and assistive technologies are already changing how we work together in established businesses and trade across international boundaries.

Many of these changes will inadvertently make greater inclusion and equality in the workplace much easier and more practical but we would caution that there is also a significant social benefit to working and given links between social isolation and ill-health, we need to be careful to find a balance that achieves not only inclusion but reduces isolation and encourages integration.

Historically, much of the work undertaken to assist disabled people to access work has been undertaken by charities but the objective and the principle are, in themselves, not

charitable but fundamental rights that should be protected and promoted by all if for no other reason than for the financial benefits it brings to companies and the wider economy.

# Disability & Poverty

As already explored in Disability & Employment, disabled people in work are, on average, around £2,400.00 per annum worse off than their non-disabled peers.

Touch Stone reported the average hourly rate of pay for “Equality Act Disabled Persons” to be £12.10 per hour in Quarter 4 of 2015 compared to £13.80 for non-disabled peers in the same period. [\[13\]](#)

In Scotland, the Scottish Human Rights Commission found the pay gap to be £1.20 per hour or 11%, slightly less than the average reported by Touch Stone but still equating to a loss of £2,300.00 per annum based on a full-time post.

Disabled people already face an increased cost-of-living as a result of their disability and the Disability Evidence Review [\[14\]](#) found that people who live with a disabled adult in their family are more likely to be in relative poverty.

The Scottish Human Rights Commission reported that people in families with a disabled adult are nearly twice as likely to be in poverty as others.

Combined with established links to educational attainment and future earnings, it would therefore appear that children in a family with a disabled adult are more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment and face further poverty in later life.

The SHRC went on to note that in relation to levels of “*material deprivation*”, this has “*increased in recent years across Scotland, with disabled people, ethnic minorities and women most significantly affected.*”

Scotland’s Children’s Commissioner for Children & Young People also found that children in Scotland were likely to have little access or exposure to cultural life as they grow up if they have a disability.

Whilst “in-work” poverty is on the increase and this may be the result of welfare reform, Scotland will have the opportunity to disassociate itself with this agenda once these powers are devolved to the Holyrood Parliament and this presents a significant opportunity to chart a different course that recognises the challenges faced by disabled people in gaining and retaining employment and considers other factors such as civic contribution based on individual ability as a means of meaningful contribution.

A report for the Department of Work & Pensions through the Office for Disability Issues found that disabled people were “*significantly less likely to engage in formal volunteering*” and were also less likely to participate in cultural, leisure and sporting activities than their non-disabled peers.

Whether poverty is measured financially; in terms of relative opportunity for inclusion or recognised value, it remains clear that the gap being experienced by disabled people needs to be addressed and closed for so many reasons, not only for the benefit of the disabled person but also for their children and future generations.

# Disability & the Economy

Based on the NRS Scotland's mid-year population survey, Scotland has around 3.4m adults of working age (16-64 years).

As a crude estimate, with 558,000 of these persons being disabled persons earning average wages, the inequality gap in earnings would be £1.34bn per annum with estimated tax receipt losses of around £185m per annum for the Scottish Treasury.

There are further financial considerations that should be factored in to.

There is research to suggest causal links between “happiness” and general health and further links between a sense of purpose and fulfilment and meaningful endeavour such as work or volunteering and mental well-being.

Work or volunteering has been demonstrated to increase “self-esteem”; mental health and physical health thus reducing use of health services as well as creating greater social capital.

Increases in unemployment as a result of mental ill-health is one of the most significant challenges facing the Scottish economy in the coming years, placing further pressure on healthcare services and reducing tax receipts.

This “lost” income reduces the Scottish Government's ability to close the financial poverty gap and provide much needed financial assistance to those who are most in need.

Increased unemployment also creates a strain on the social care budgets of local authorities and this will divert money away from disabled people who are severely limited in their ability to integrate into mainstream employment as a result of disability.

In terms of proportion of GDP expended in relation to achieving social inclusion and equality, the Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED) [\[15\]](#) found that the average social expenditure related to disability across the 27 EU Member States was 1.1%.

This varied from 0.3% of GDP in Greece to 2.6% in Sweden and Norway.

It is interesting to note that although Sweden has a much higher than average GDP spend on disability, it also has one of the lowest disability employment gaps.

An OECD report into expenditure in relation to supporting people with disabilities defined expenditure as either “passive” or “active” with “passive” expenditure being benefit payments in lieu of investment in employment support and vocational training.

Countries with the highest “active” expenditure were recorded as Belgium; Denmark; the Netherlands; Germany and Norway with active spending exceeding passive spending by 10% or more.

Canada; Portugal; Poland; Switzerland and Sweden all had above average “active” spending (between 6 and 9% above passive spending).

These countries are also amongst the countries with the lowest employment gap statistics.

As well as better enabling finite financial resources to be allocated, there are other considerable benefits to better integrating disabled people into the workforce.

There is strong evidence and first hand testimony from large employers who have successfully recruited; integrated; trained and retained disabled employees in their mainstream workforce.

Significant benefits include increased productivity across the company - a measure that U.K. and Scottish companies have historically and continue to lag in with U.K. productivity only marginally ahead of the EU average and significantly behind countries such as Germany; France; Sweden; Switzerland; Norway; Finland; Denmark; Austria and the Netherlands.

Reduced costs associated with recruitment and retention as a result of a stable and loyal workforce add significant financial benefits to the host company and the company’s customer satisfaction rates also appear to increase.

Disabled people as consumers represent a significant and sizeable market in Scotland; the U.K.; the EU and internationally.

Companies engaging and properly integrating disabled people into not only their workforce but their research; design and deployment activities will be better equipped; better informed and better able to reach out to and meet the needs and demands of this segment of the market, giving them competitive advantage and potentially opening themselves to new customers and consumers.

This would, in turn, lead to increased profits and increased tax revenues which can then be re-distributed to develop greater equality and inclusion across society, creating a virtuous circle.

# International Approaches

There are 2 prevalent disability models across the EU, the “medical model” of disability and the “social model” of disability.

The Independent Living Movement and protagonists of disability integration subscribe to the “social model” of disability as it recognises that everyone has ability and capacity in context but that social and physical constructs may “disable” people from full participation.

Denmark is a leading EU country who subscribe to the social model of disability and has developed a welfare system that reflects their beliefs.

The disability pension (*Førtidspension*) is not based on disability or any medical diagnosis but instead focuses on the person’s “working ability” which they define as the person’s ability to fulfil the requirements involved in a particular job and to earn an income from full or partial employment.

This trend is reflected in other EU countries such as France; the Czech Republic; Italy and Germany who are now moving toward assessing “working ability” and participation, moving away from a medical model of disability.

Other EU countries continue to seek to ensure financial support rather than social inclusion and full or partial participation. This may present as an impediment to the integration and a shift in paradigm from “disability” to “ability” and therefore any support system should hold the person’s ability at it’s core.

In considering “Best Practice”, the Academic Network of European Disability Experts suggested that Personal Assistant schemes play an important role in providing people with disabilities with support tailored to their needs.

Whilst it reflects on the success of a Direct Payments Scheme in the U.K. as a means to achieving this, there are examples of other EU Member States seeing the role of Personal Assistant as being much broader than a means to provide care and home based support.

In Poland, the Foundation of People with Muscular Disorders acts as a facilitator of social relations for the beneficiary.

SPAEN is currently piloting a similar scheme through the [Peace of Mind programme](#) but again there needs to be a paradigm shift away from Direct Payments being used for stringent care criteria to wider social inclusion across the funding local authority councils to “permit” Direct Payment recipients to make best use of such schemes.

Estonia ran a one year project to increase awareness and computer skills amongst disabled people with the aim of increasing their level of activity and providing options for activities by arranging computer training for beginners; creating free public internet access points and offering support workers, paid and voluntary, to support project users.

The project was seen as a way of expanding the awareness and possibility of finding a job; improving coping with everyday life and enhancing skills as well as improving the competitiveness of disabled persons in the labour market.

Iceland significantly increased the ceiling for earned income before this affected disability benefits. This was considered the best way to enhance income security for disabled workers given the established links between poverty and disability (and we would contest thinking of not only the disabled person but their dependents too).

One more recent development which is much closer to home is the devolution of budgetary decisions and discretion to Greater Manchester through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

The Authority has set out a collective ambition for the Greater Manchester populous, governed by *“Start well, live well and age well”*.

The Authority is looking at how the outcomes of the people of Greater Manchester can be improved through a whole range of public services combining efforts; budgets and sharing objectives and goals.

Whilst the Authority makes no reference to “disability” or better integration in the context of disabled people, it does take a holistic view of society and improved health outcomes for all through having employment; good housing and connections to family and communities.

It is too early for the Authority to report on any progress made or obstacles encountered but it certainly mirrors models deployed in other EU nations such as Sweden where responsibility for disability inclusion is devolved to municipalities and county councils but centrally funded by national Government.

Much of the emphasis for achieving equality is devolved to municipalities through decentralised responsibility.

Again in Sweden, there was a single, independent agency that co-ordinated policy and reviewed impact at a devolved level (Handisam or the “Agency for Disability Policy Co-ordination). Handisam was closed in 2014 with its responsibilities being transferred to the Agency for Inclusion (Myndigheten för delaktighet)

In Austria, the Public Employment Service (AMS) provides financial subsidies in the form of integration subsidies for an individual job or non-profit employment projects.

In the Netherlands, social support applicants (disabled people) are surveyed annually to ascertain their satisfaction at the level of support and service they have received from their municipality.

This information is then fed back to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Support (VWS) and annual statistical comparators are devised and published.

The Netherlands had over 400 municipalities in 2013 and each had considerable freedom over how they implemented the Social Support Act (WMO).

Norway is generally considered to have very few laws and regulations that focus on disabled people only or exclusively. This is considered the best approach to inclusiveness; social equality and integration.

Finland’s approach is to have laws and regulations that focus on “functional capacity” and “work ability”. Assistance is also provided to support disabled people to engage in a full social and recreational life.

Again, the one caveat SPAEN would note in relation to the Greater Manchester project is to ensure that the measure of success is based on the “social” rather than “medical” model of disability and that it measures increased social capital rather than just decreased health expenditure.

SPAEN would also welcome a support system that mirrored that of the Netherlands, whereby supported persons are routinely surveyed to ascertain their satisfaction with the level of support they are afforded.

This information could be collected at local authority or Integrated Joint Board (IJB) level and used as a means of allocating additional resource as well as capturing; analysing and sharing “good practice” across the nation.

What’s clear is that no single model exists but in reforming the Social Security system for Scotland, the Scottish Parliament is well placed to consider and devise a model that better suits the unique needs and challenges facing the Scottish population and that can measure and seek to enhance and improve “quality of life” rather than merely compensating for loss, exclusion or disability.

# Scotland 10 years on

In 2005, the then Scottish Executive published a report, *“Disability and Employment in Scotland: A Review of the Evidence Base”*.

Returning to the findings of this report after having undertaken the initial desktop research and development of this discussion paper, it jarred that many of the issues; recommendations and evidence gaps still exist - not only in Scotland, as the desktop review considered materials from across the globe, but that we, as a nation, may not yet fully understand and have not yet addressed the identified gaps in the intervening decade.

Amongst the main findings of the report were:

- *“The number of people claiming disability related benefits continues to increase while the employment rate of disabled people remains low with employment programmes and equality legislation having only a modest impact on overall employment rates”*
- *“Disabled people are far less likely to have qualifications than people without disabilities and this clearly has a negative effect on their employment outcomes”*
- *“When they are in employment, disabled people are far more likely to be employed in low level occupations and are therefore likely to have lower incomes than people without disabilities”*
- *“Programmes aimed at disabled people rarely succeed in placing more than a fifth of participants in work (and there is debate over the best way to measure programme outcomes)”*
- *“There is some evidence that access to mainstream employment services may be restricted for disabled people”*

It is recognised that much of this pertains to reserved matters and that the Scottish Executive and succeeding Scottish Government will have limited ability to positively affect these areas, excepting education which the Scottish Government has control over, however we are now at a juncture in the devolution of powers where Scotland can start to break the cycle that has remained in place in the proceeding decade.

It resonates that the review of 2005 also speaks of the potential use of Direct Payments as a means to disabled persons accessing mainstream work. At a time of relative economic

wealth (prior to the 2008 financial crash), the authors noted that *“many local authorities have been conservative in their interpretation of the legislation and only make payments for assistance delivered in the home to facilitate personal care.”*

It would therefore seem consistent to suggest that the scope and range of activities and aspirations being supported through local authority social care systems has not narrowed in reaction to financial pressure but that this is a historical and deeply engrained belief and behaviour system that does not recognise the importance of support to gain employment or greater financial freedom for disabled people.

With the benefit of hindsight and statistics, it is clear that Scotland has not really made any tangible, meaningful progress toward full and proper equality for disabled people in the workplace.

A review of the eligibility criteria for Self-Directed Support highlights that the conservative interpretation of legislation by local authorities continues and access to meaningful work or volunteering is seen neither as a priority or a necessity, despite the right to work being enshrined in the Convention on Human Rights and the International Declaration of Human Rights.

A new approach is required if we are to make meaningful progress in the next decade.

The Scottish public sector appears to lag behind the private sector in recruiting and retaining disabled persons within their workforce and it may be helpful to examine why this is the case.

Scotland has a vibrant SME sector who would undoubtedly benefit from the entrepreneurial spirit and the associated benefits a mixed ability workforce would bring - improved morale; increased staff retention; a greater talent pool to recruit from and better customer satisfaction.

Bodies such as the Institute of Directors (IoD) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) may provide a gateway to these businesses and could help highlight the significant benefits of a more equal approach to recruitment of skills and talent.

Line managers are also a significant problem in recognising the latent ability of disabled people who are in employment but are unable to achieve career progression.

Bodies such as the Chartered Management Institute (CMI); the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) and the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) are well positioned to highlight the significant benefits of a more equal approach to developing and promoting talented staff within organisations and could also be key delivery partners in raising awareness of and confidence in appropriately managing and supporting disabled staff.

And Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPO's) have a massive role in advancing the agenda of disabled people in the employment market in partnership with employers and representative bodies through training; advice; assistance and support in practical application of equality policies and practices.

The opportunity to revamp and re-design welfare and benefits system and job programmes means this may present the opportune time to consider, examine and develop something uniquely Scottish (whilst borrowing what works from our European and international neighbours).

Evidence from our review suggests that systems developed in other EU nations where disabled people were fully involved and represented tended to be more successful and SPAEN would openly welcome the opportunity to be part of a wider stakeholder group looking at how a Scottish system might be designed to maximise opportunity for equality.

Disability, including the affects of mental ill-health on people's ability to retain or attain meaningful employment, appears to be on the increase both in Scotland and across the EU Member States.

We face an uncertain future as the opportunity for migrant workers to fill labour gaps and meet demand may or may not be hindered as a result of a Brexit vote.

Regardless of the outcome of the future negotiations and our relationship with the EU, it would seem prudent to make best our efforts to redefine Scottish culture to ensure we recognise the latent talent pool that exists and can quickly and easily be integrated into our workforce bringing with them significant social, cultural and economic benefits.

# Summary

Disabled people face a number of social and economic challenges to this day.

For those who can or wish to work, access to employment is challenging, especially in mainstream employment. Promotion is also extremely limited leading to a “fatalist” view of disabled people seeking or in employment.

And yet the evidence from large employers such as Lloyds TSB; Ernst & Young; Starbucks; AT&T and others suggests that disabled people bring invaluable skills and economic benefits to their employer in terms of productivity; morale; retention; attendance; customer satisfaction and enhanced product and service delivery design.

Much of the “Good Practice” captured in the findings of the Academic Network of European Disability Experts points to Direct Payments and the employment of Personal Assistants as a key means to social integration and participation across the EU Member States.

As a long-standing advocate of Direct Payments, SPAEN would naturally concur with this as we have long seen the benefit of a system that puts the supported person at the very heart of their social care support arrangements and, until recently, Direct Payments were the only such means allowing this.

However, SPAEN also welcomed the Scottish Government’s Self-Directed Support strategy and Social Care (Self-directed Support)(Scotland) Act to support the aims of the strategy and widen the means through which social care can be delivered.

Whilst this shift in policy and strategy is welcomed, the statistics from 1 year of operation (2014 - 2015) since the Social Care Act suggests that a seismic shift is not imminent.

Three quarters of the then 35,000 reported social care recipients were still receiving local authority provided supports and data provided to SPAEN for year 2 statistics (2015 - 2016), with a data set of 47,000 reported social care clients suggests the number of people receiving a Direct Payment is decreasing whilst local authority provided services continues to increase.

In the context of this discussion paper and with the aspiration of disabled people achieving greater financial freedom; parity and equality in the workplace, significant decreases in the number of people using more flexible support options is unwelcome and worrying.

Reflecting on the findings of the Scottish Executive's review in 2005, where it was observed that many local authorities were "*conservative*" in their interpretation and were only facilitating home care, it is clear we need a fundamental paradigm shift at local government level too.

Local government in Scotland consists mainly of Councillors attached to the main political parties (excepting "Independent Councillors with no political affiliation) and there is, therefore, an inherent link between the Scottish political party system which provides local Councillors and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

In recognition of this link, SPAEN calls on all Scottish political parties to commit to addressing the employment gap at local **and** national level.

At national level, reforming the welfare and benefits system to support disabled people to exit poverty and increase economic performance will soon present as a significant opportunity in the gift and remit of the Scottish Parliament.

Reforms should consider the social model of disability i.e. what the person can do rather than focussing on what they cannot and then make suitable and adequate provisions and supports to allow persons to achieve their full potential within society.

These reforms could reflect and acknowledge that people are working to "capacity" as well as availability and could include recognition that some people will remain unable to work; some people may require an extended period to integrate into the workplace and achieve their full capacity and that volunteering also has significant economic and social benefits and should not therefore be discounted as someone achieving their "capacity".

Reform Scotland [16] has already made recommendations on a "Basic Income Guarantee" and having such assurance may assist in empowering disabled people and employers to move to a more integrated model for the future as well as addressing the spectre of poverty that shadows not only disabled people now, but also their families in the future.

Legislation is always an option but, as described in the Scottish Government's publication of 2005 [17], its impact on changing behaviours is often "modest" (in reference to the Disability Discrimination Act).

It may be that the prevailing stereotypes; prejudices and misconceptions that prevented disabled people from entering into and / or remaining in the mainstream workforce when reviewed in 2005 are still barriers in 2016.

Indeed, some of the evidence collected from disabled people and contained in the desktop review suggests that attitudinal barriers still remain the most significant "disabler" that people face (as highlighted by the Harvard review referred to earlier).

Inequality continues to detriment society as a whole, whether it is calculated in lost revenue; opportunity costs; health and social care costs or cultural enhancement.

Scotland is a poorer country while the gap between disabled and non-disabled people remains - on any and every level and in every measure.

And at local level, we need to dispel the prevailing belief that social care is something that happens only in a person's home. The provision of support to remain at home is akin to a "medical" model of disability and it is only through increasing opportunities and participation in the full range of civic society that we can truly follow the "social" model.

That means widening the scope for people to receive Direct Payments or other, less traditional means of social care (such as Option 2 or 4 under the Social Care Act); reducing the restrictions on the activities and undertakings that can be funded and re-defining what "success" at an individual user level means (with cognisance of the person's "ability" and "capacity").

In merging Health & Social Care in Scotland, we must be careful to keep a keen focus on the overarching principles of the "Social Model" of disability and not allow a focus on moving back to a "Medical Model" that assesses success against reduced health interventions at the expense of social and cultural integration.

As one SDS user recently told us:

*"Before Self-Directed Support, I was a dirty dog in a cage. Now I'm a clean dog in a cage."*

Reducing unplanned hospital admissions and keeping people in their own homes or a homely environment is a good starting point but it will fail to recognise the value of individuals if we don't get rid of the "cage". We will only redefine the medical (especially psychological and physiological) disabilities and shift pressures from acute and secondary care to primary care but it will still, in essence, be defined as a "medical" disability.

In 2010, the OECD recommended that programmes aimed at integrating disabled people into work should have a stronger focus on "ability" rather than disability and that there should be greater and better engagement with the labour market to increase understanding amongst employers about "ability" rather than "disability".

This fits perfectly with Scotland's position of subscribing to the Social Model of Disability, we should be focussing on capacity; talent and ability.

As new powers are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, new opportunities to do things differently present themselves and SPAEN would openly welcome the opportunity to form part of a wider reference group to consider what a "Scottish" model may look like.

At the very least, we run the risk of raising awareness of and changing long-established and seemingly entrenched attitudes toward disabled people at no additional cost to existing schemes and at best, we could start to see a truly transformational, inclusive and assets based approach that benefits the economy; the communities we live in, the people that make up those communities both now and in the future.

Whatever we do, we must start to take measures to ensure that we “open the glass door”.

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