



# **Building a Disability Inclusive Recovery**

**Leonard Cheshire's Plan for Jobs for Disabled People**

**September 2020**

**Leonard Cheshire** 

# Building a Disability Inclusive Recovery: Leonard Cheshire's Plan for Jobs for Disabled People

**Leonard Cheshire supports individuals to live, learn and work as independently as they choose, whatever their ability. Led by people with experience of disability, we are at the heart of local life – opening up opportunities, choice and support in communities around the globe.**

We have significant expertise in working with disabled people in the UK and internationally to support them to overcome barriers to employment. In the last year alone, we supported over 32,000 disabled people to find employment globally through our programmes. This includes Change 100, which supports young disabled students and graduates to access the workplace by undertaking paid internships in top UK companies; Change Works, offering employability support to disabled adults in London; and Changing Futures, which offers employability training and paid work placements to adults with a disability or a long term condition in Wales.



# 1. Why we need a disability inclusive recovery

Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the lives of disabled people in the UK. The virus has quite literally cost many disabled people their lives, with two thirds of people dying from Covid-19 having an underlying health condition or disability.<sup>1</sup> It has also affected disabled people's quality of life, with Leonard Cheshire's recent Covid-19 survey showing that:

**55%**

of disabled people in receipt of social care experienced a change in social care due to Covid-19

**55%**

of disabled people reported an impact on their wellbeing

**18%**

of disabled people reported difficulties in accessing food<sup>2</sup>

Covid-19 is also set to have an overwhelmingly negative impact on the employment prospects and economic inclusion of disabled people. Recent research from Citizens Advice shows that 1 in 4 disabled people have reported that they are at risk of, or in the process of, being made redundant.<sup>3</sup> This rises to 1 in 2 – or 51% – when individuals with a long term condition are considered. This rise in redundancy is partially due to some disabled people not being able to safely return to the workplace because of the risk that Covid-19 poses, but also potentially due to employer discrimination. Previous research from Leonard Cheshire revealed that 24% of employers stated that they would be less likely to employ someone with a disability.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to the UK-wide lockdown in March 2020, the UK was making good progress towards increasing the proportion of disabled people in work, with 54% of disabled people in employment,<sup>5</sup> compared to 45% a decade earlier. However, Covid-19 has the potential to stop this burgeoning progress. Not only do the effects of the virus impact on the employment of disabled people, but previous research has shown that during recessions, the economic inclusion of disabled people suffers. In the 2008 recession there is evidence from the UK and internationally that disabled employees were more likely to experience job losses and wage freezes than non-disabled employees.<sup>6</sup> We need urgent and decisive action from the government and employers to ensure that disabled people are not further left behind by the Covid-19 recession.

**Previous research from Leonard Cheshire revealed that 24% of employers stated that they would be less likely to employ someone with a disability**



We understand that Covid-19, and the subsequent recession, has affected the employment opportunities of so many people across the UK. However, due to the evidence that economic downturns do disproportionately affect disabled people, it is imperative that the government remains committed to its manifesto pledge<sup>7</sup> of reducing the disability employment gap. The government has pledged to 'build back better' from the pandemic, yet in its recent 'Plan for Jobs' only mentioned disability once. Disabled people should be able to expect the same access to financial security and career satisfaction as non-disabled people. **The government's jobs recovery should embed a commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 8 at its heart - by 2030 disabled people should be able to be employed and paid equally to non-disabled people.**<sup>8</sup> Committing to Goal 8 would ensure that the needs of disabled

people in the UK, and globally, are addressed with more inclusive workplaces and a stronger economy that is built on fairness and equality.

As the government has not currently set out how it plans to create a **disability inclusive economic recovery, Leonard Cheshire has created its own 'Plan for Jobs' for disabled people in the UK.** Our 'Plan for Jobs' builds on the feedback from over 1,100 disabled people responding to Leonard Cheshire's Covid-19 survey, as well as feedback from our staff working with disabled people and employers. It sets out key policy recommendations for the government to ensure they put in place measures to support disabled people to find and retain high quality and sustainable work, and also ensure that employers are creating new jobs in the future which are disability inclusive.

## 2. The business benefits of disability inclusion

Pursuing a disability inclusive recovery not only ensures that the UK lives up to its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but it also makes good business sense. There is considerable evidence that employing a diverse workforce, including disabled people and those with long term conditions, increases revenue, market share and productivity for businesses. In particular, disability inclusive and diverse businesses achieve:

- **Higher revenues:** Research carried out by Accenture in the US found that disability-inclusive companies achieved 28% higher revenue, double the net income and 30% higher economic profit margins compared with other companies in their sample.<sup>9</sup>
- **Higher retention:** Employees with disabilities have better retention and low absenteeism rates and are loyal, reliable and highly motivated.<sup>10</sup>
- **Improved market share:** Many companies find that employing disabled people increases their understanding and ability to serve their customers with disabilities or long term conditions.<sup>11</sup> Disabled people are also consumers, with the 'Purple Pound' being worth an estimated £249 billion.<sup>12</sup>
- **Workplace diversity and culture:** The Institute for Corporate Productivity found that "twice as many high-performing organisations address diversity and inclusion at the highest levels of overall business strategy."<sup>13</sup>
- **Social responsibility:** Companies that demonstrate social responsibility are more competitive, and they attract a larger number of employees and customers.<sup>14</sup>

Businesses servicing the interests of disabled people also have the potential to thrive. In Australia, businesses providing services to disabled people, including care and assistive technology, are now some of the fastest growing in the country, despite the economic downturn.<sup>15</sup> A disability inclusive recovery can therefore fuel economic growth for businesses working to return to economic health after the pandemic.

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### 3. Supporting disabled people to find a job

Before the Covid-19 recession over 3.2 million disabled people across the UK were economically inactive. Many of these individuals may not be able to work due to their long term condition or disability. However, with the number of people claiming Universal Credit (UC) rising by 2.4 million in the first two months of the Covid-19 'lockdown',<sup>16</sup> it is clear that more disabled people will be finding themselves out of work. This is supported by the previously cited research by Citizen's Advice which highlights that already a quarter of disabled people are at risk of redundancy.

Leonard Cheshire's employment advisors, working across programmes such as our bespoke Change Works and Change 100 programmes, as well as government funded programmes like the Work and Health Programme, have already seen the impact of Covid-19 on the employment of the disabled people they work with. Many disabled people have been placed on furlough via the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or have already been made redundant. Worryingly, our advisors report that some disabled people who

have been furloughed due to a need to 'shield' are facing redundancy, or are having to make the difficult choice to leave their current jobs as they fear that they are not/cannot be made Covid-19 safe. Based on feedback from disabled people and our staff, Leonard Cheshire recommends that the government takes the following actions to support disabled people who have lost their jobs back into the workplace, and to provide a more comprehensive safety net for disabled people who are not able to work.

**Change Works** is an employment programme for disabled people in London, offering 1-1 support to job search and contact employers to set up placements. We also provide in work support and links to other programmes with financial incentives to employers.

**Change 100** is Leonard Cheshire's programme of paid summer work placements, professional development, and mentoring. It aims to remove barriers experienced by disabled people in the workplace, to allow them to achieve their potential. It is delivered in partnership with leading employers. The programme is designed for talented students and graduates with disabilities or long term conditions.

**1) Introduce a Jobs Guarantee for newly unemployed disabled people.** Long term unemployment has a scarring impact on an individual's mental health and wellbeing and future earnings potential. To prevent this negative impact, the government, via the Department for Work and Pensions, should offer access to a Jobs Guarantee for any disabled person unemployed for more than three months. This should include people claiming benefits like Universal Credit, as well as anyone who is economically inactive, for example students transitioning into the workplace from higher education. The Jobs Guarantee should be an entirely voluntary initiative and offer disabled people six months paid work and training at the Living Wage as a minimum. As is the case with Kickstart, the government should offer employers a grant to cover the salaries of disabled people recruited through the Jobs Guarantee. Employers offering jobs under the Jobs Guarantee should demonstrate their commitment to operating inclusive and accessible workplaces, including via Disability Confident. They should also highlight

**Long term unemployment has a scarring impact on an individual's mental health and wellbeing and future earnings potential**

how they will make use of schemes like Access to Work to put in place reasonable adjustments. Employers should offer job roles which are sustainable and have permanent, meaningful opportunities for employment and progression. Jobs offered under the Jobs Guarantee should not replace existing roles. Rather, they should be aimed at developing the careers of disabled people, and be part of existing recruitment drives or schemes like returnships.<sup>17</sup> To ensure that employers are committed to retaining disabled staff members recruited through the Jobs Guarantee, employers should be offered an incentive payment by the government for each Jobs Guarantee employee still in work after 9 months. Alongside the offer of a job, the Jobs Guarantee should offer disabled people training opportunities, including digital skills, and wrap around support, for example debt management advice and health and wellbeing support. Leonard Cheshire's Changing Futures programme in Wales uses a similar model to the Jobs Guarantee and has resulted in 337 disabled people participating in work placements with over 200 employers.

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**2) Improve Kickstart**, so that it is better tailored to disabled young people.

Kickstart is the government's £2 billion scheme offering young people aged 16-24 employment and training with an employer for six months. It is paid at the National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, and is currently only open to young people claiming Universal Credit (UC). Although Leonard Cheshire welcomes the government's investment in Kickstart, we are part of a coalition of disability charities calling for Kickstart to be reformed<sup>18</sup> to enable more young disabled people to take part. We are calling for:

- The scheme to be opened up to a wider group than just young people claiming UC e.g. those with Education, Health and Care plans and claiming Employment Support Allowance. Participants on the scheme who are UC claimants should be able to revert automatically to UC when the placement ends so that they do not lose out financially during the five week wait of a new claim. Consideration should also be given to how Kickstart can be joined up to Supported Internships.
- Kickstart participants to get access to immediate support to Access to Work from day one of their placement. This may mean that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will need to fast track the Access to Work process for Kickstart participants. Having the right equipment, transport, and support in place from day one of an individual's employment is crucial for disabled people to succeed at work.
- An evaluation of Kickstart and the employers who participate – to ensure that increased job outcomes for young disabled people are being delivered. Employers should be required to outline the support and training that participants will receive as part of the application criteria. Kickstart employers and participants should make an agreement about the training and skills development that will take place at the outset of the placement. Having created truly additional roles to meet the Kickstart criteria, and where there has been genuine skills development and training, it is reasonable to establish an expectation that these roles will continue beyond the period of the placement.





**3) Continue to offer access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to people who are clinically vulnerable to Covid-19.** Not all jobs can be conducted at home, and not all jobs – particularly public facing roles – can be made clinically safe for some disabled people who are extremely clinically vulnerable to Covid-19. The government should extend the furlough scheme to ensure that these individuals are able to remain employed and also have their incomes protected through the pandemic. Countries like Germany have extended their equivalent to furlough until 2022 for individuals whose working hours have reduced.<sup>19</sup>

**4) Reinforce employers' obligations under the Equality Act 2010** to put in place reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process. Our employment advisors have reported a worrying trend in reasonable adjustments not being offered to disabled people applying for jobs online. The current competition for jobs – with 6.8 people competing for each vacancy<sup>20</sup> – has anecdotally resulted in some employers not prioritising accessible recruitment practices. Our advisors have also noticed that the benchmark for entry level jobs has increased, with one entry level administrative post requiring eight years of administration experience. These benchmarks exclude many disabled people from the labour market, especially disabled young people, due to the increased likelihood of having gaps in their work history.



**5) Invest in specialist disability employment and training programmes.**

Through its Plan for Jobs the government pledged to double the number of Work Coaches in Jobcentres and invest further in traineeships and Apprenticeships. Although this investment is welcome, Work Coaches are not specialists in supporting disabled people into work, and schemes like Apprenticeships and Kickstart still need reform to enable more people with a learning disability to access them. The government should provide further investment in specialist disability employment support, increasing the number of Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, investing in existing disability employment programmes like IPES<sup>21</sup> – particularly from older jobseekers; and continue the Maynard Commission’s reforms to improve the disability inclusivity of Apprenticeships.<sup>22</sup> As many Jobcentres are still closed due to the pandemic, access to support from a Disability Employment Adviser should be offered by phone or online, if in person support is not available.

**6) Address the digital skills gap experienced by disabled people.**

Disabled people are three times more likely to have no qualifications than non-disabled people,<sup>23</sup> and 18% of disabled people have never used the internet.<sup>24</sup> During the pandemic, job search support from Jobcentre Plus and employment providers has predominantly moved online, and many jobs are now being conducted at home via the internet. However, many disabled people on Leonard Cheshire’s employment programmes do not have access to the internet, laptops or smartphones to conduct job searches, with other individuals needing training and support to apply for jobs online. Research from Ofcom suggests this is due to the affordability of devices, and also a lack of accessibility. For example, 18% of individuals with visual impairments stated that their use of laptops, tablets and smartphones was limited by their accessibility.<sup>25</sup> The government should invest in a programme to improve digital skills and access to the internet and digital products for disabled people. This programme should be in partnership with technology companies such as Google and Microsoft.

**7) While people are facing insecurity at work and seeking new employment, the welfare system should work as a safety net to prevent them falling into poverty.** Disability benefits must be reassessed to meet the additional costs of disability.<sup>26</sup> The welfare system does not currently account for these additional costs, with many disabled people who claim benefits unable to cover basic living expenses.

- Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to receive the same £20 uplift that UC has received during the pandemic. Respondents to our survey on the impact of Covid-19 who are in receipt of PIP cited examples of their daily living costs soaring due to the need to buy Personal Protective Equipment for themselves and their carers. Some individuals reported needing to buy additional specialist equipment as services like physiotherapy are temporarily not available. Given that disabled people are more likely to be affected by the Covid-19 crisis, the government should assess what additional financial support is needed so that disabled people can access the job market during the Covid-19 recession.
- End the five week wait for a new UC claim. The five week wait for the first payment of UC should be removed due to evidence that it causes increased financial hardship for claimants.<sup>27</sup> Given the labour market disruption caused by Covid-19 and the accompanying increase of new UC claims, the government must make all UC advances for disabled people non-repayable grants during the duration of the pandemic. All debt repayment deductions from UC should be suspended to ease financial hardship for the duration of the current crisis.

- DWP's suspension of work conditionality and sanctions in the first three months of the pandemic was a welcome step that accounted for the barriers faced by disabled people in securing work. Given that many disabled people still face safety restrictions in order to protect themselves from the pandemic and are facing a significantly contracted job market, the government's decision to reinstate sanctions and work conditionality should be immediately reversed. Prior to Covid-19, sanctions had been proven to disproportionately affect disabled people with evidence that they do not work to support people into work and often result in further embedding cycles of poverty. The government must act to abolish work conditionality and the sanctions regime to protect disabled people from even greater hardship due to the Covid-19 jobs crisis.

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## 4. Supporting employers and disabled employees to stay in work

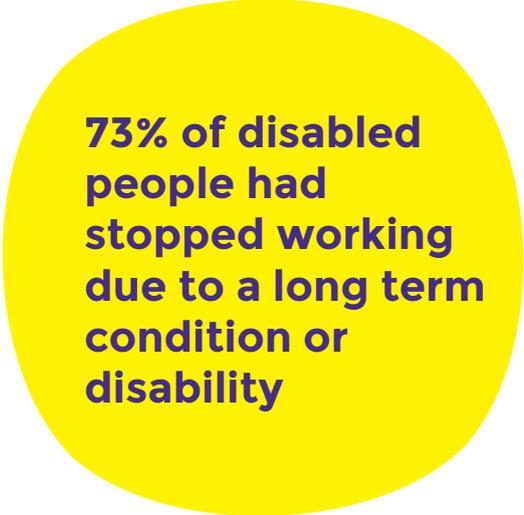
A Leonard Cheshire survey prior to the pandemic highlighted that 73% of disabled people had stopped working due to a long term condition or disability.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, recent statistics from DWP/DHSC show that disabled people leave work at twice the rate of non-disabled people.<sup>29</sup> A key part of a disability inclusive recovery and a Plan for Jobs for disabled people should be for the government and employers to put in place and uphold policies to ensure that workplaces are inclusive and accessible to all. Disabled people should be able to access the reasonable adjustments they need to carry out their jobs effectively, so that they do not have to choose to leave work due to their disability or long term condition. This is even more crucial due to Covid-19, as we are starting to see disabled workers on furlough exiting the workplace due to concerns over the safety of their job due to Covid-19. To ensure that disabled people are not leaving their jobs unnecessarily due to a long term condition or disability, the government should implement the following.

### 1) Introduce a day one right to reasonable adjustments, workplace modifications and flexible working for disabled people.

Disabled people should not have to wait for 26 weeks to request flexible working. Flexibilities and reasonable adjustments such as working hours and access to assistive technology should be in place from day one of an individual's employment, to enable them to succeed in their role. The rapid action that has been taken by employers in accommodating working from home in response to the Covid-19 outbreak has been welcome. This demonstrates that employers are able to quickly adjust job roles to circumstances. DWP have consulted on introducing similar measures in the Health is Everyone's Business consultation in July 2019, and we urge the government to urgently put in place reforms to turn rhetoric into reality.

### 2) Improvements to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) introduced during the pandemic

should be made permanent so that disabled people, including people with mental health conditions, can remain in work and thrive in their job. SSP should be increased and eligibility should be extended to lower paid workers to break the link between disability and financial insecurity.



**73% of disabled people had stopped working due to a long term condition or disability**

**3) Invest in Access to Work:** Access to Work should be promoted to employers so that awareness and participation increases.

- Our research shows that only 23% of disabled adults in the UK (currently or previously working) say they have never received Access to Work support. This figure drops to just 14% in Scotland and Wales, and as low as 10% in Northern Ireland.<sup>30</sup> Although the latest data from DWP on Access to Work shows an 18% increase in individuals receiving support between 2018/19 and 2019/20, still only 39,060 disabled people and those with long term conditions are in receipt of support.<sup>31</sup> A proactive marketing campaign needs to be undertaken, particularly in the devolved nations, to ensure that disabled people and employers are aware of the support available through Access to Work to fund the reasonable adjustments which many disabled people need.
- 69% of disabled people in receipt of Access to Work had to wait more than three months for their application to be approved.<sup>32</sup> Access to Work is such a vital scheme for disabled people, but making a claim for support through the scheme is often lengthy and bureaucratic. We know from our employment advisors that the pandemic has only exacerbated these wait times. In the current economic climate, Access to Work applications should be fast-tracked so that disabled people's ability to take up a job offer or stay in work isn't jeopardised by a failure to provide timely support that they are entitled to. This fast-track service should apply to disabled people entering work through Kickstart and our proposed Jobs Guarantee.

- Access to Work advisers should be upskilled, particularly in their understanding of Assistive Technology. Often the advice received by the disabled people Leonard Cheshire works with is out of date and does not always promote apps and easily accessible technology on mainstream devices. A more specialist understanding of Assistive Technology could enable disabled people to access more effective tools quicker.

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#### 4) Adjustment passports or ‘purple passports’ should be introduced.

Adjustment passports are records which identify the reasonable adjustments, modifications and equipment a disabled person has received in education and work. Currently when a disabled person moves from education to work, they lose access to support from education providers, and need to apply to Access to Work to gain access to equipment or support. Similarly, when a disabled person changes jobs, they need to reapply to Access to Work for support. An adjustment passport should be introduced to outline the support an individual requires. Companies such as BT and also the civil service use currently use adjustment passports to support their disabled employees’ internal career progression. They can act as an important tool in communication between line managers and disabled staff members. They can improve and embed identification and support for disabled people and provide help for line managers. The government should also consider how to join up support between education and employment, and also ensure that support and equipment awarded from Access to Work can stay with an individual when they change jobs, to prevent disabled people being without the support they need to succeed in work. Joined up workplace adjustments is something that the Canadian government has introduced through its accessibility strategy for public services in Canada.<sup>33</sup>

**Adjustment passports are records which identify the reasonable adjustments, modifications and equipment a disabled person has received in education and work**

5) **Introduce mandatory reporting** on employers’ performance on building inclusive workplaces for disabled people. 24% of employers stated that they would be less likely to employ someone with a disability.<sup>34</sup> To ensure that progress is being made towards reducing the disability employment gap, and to encourage employers to remain committed to disability inclusion, large employers employing more than 250 people should be required to undertake mandatory reporting of how many disabled people they employ. The government should also build on the success of gender pay gap reporting and mandate large employers to report on their disability pay gap.

6) Matthew Taylor’s 2018 proposals to establish a **single labour market enforcement agency**<sup>35</sup> should finally be taken forward so that disabled workers are aware of their rights and can access them easily. An enforcement agency could help address the main obstacles to justice faced by people who encounter a problem at work: not knowing where to go, thinking the process would be too difficult or time consuming, and thinking that no one could help.<sup>36</sup> The responsibility for enforcing workers’ rights should not lie solely with individuals taking lengthy legal cases forward. Employers must be made accountable to their responsibilities while being confident that they will be supported to comply. This enforcement agency is even more important as cuts to legal aid and funding for law centres has meant that some disabled people struggle to access free and impartial legal advice. Given the increased likelihood that disabled people will face discrimination at work during an economic downturn, it is essential that they are able to seek justice against unfair practices from employers.

## 5. Creating new disability inclusive jobs and a disability inclusive economy

There will need to be a short term intervention from the government to ensure that we have a disability inclusive economic recovery. However, it is important to note that prior to the pandemic there were structural inequalities in the economy which act as obstacles to further increasing the disability employment rate. The disability employment gap has in fact remained at around 30% now for a decade. Focusing on the UK's post-pandemic economic recovery provides the government and employers with a unique opportunity to challenge structural inequalities, and make the whole economy disability inclusive in the long term. Disabled people and those with long term conditions should not be left further behind by the pandemic. We must 'build back better' to create an inclusive and accessible economy.

**1) Use the National Strategy for Disabled People as a catalyst for change.** A disability inclusive recovery should not just focus on employment. It should focus on all aspects of disabled people's lives so that they can live, learn and work as independently as they choose. If disabled people do not have access to equal educational opportunities and outcomes, accessible communications and digital technology, transport and support to live independently, an inclusive economy cannot be created. The government's National Strategy for Disabled People, due for publication in Spring 2021, provides an ideal opportunity for the government to holistically address the socio-economic barriers preventing disabled people from "fully participat[ing] in the life of this country".<sup>37</sup> The UK government could lead the way, and learn from the example of Canada, which has introduced legislation (the Accessible Canada Act, 2019<sup>38</sup>) to create a barrier free Canada. Applicable to all public sector bodies, and organisations regulated by the government, the legislation requires organisations to create accessibility plans outlining how accessibility barriers in the built environment, communications,

employment, technology, procurement, transport and programmes will be addressed. These plans will be independently monitored, with non-compliance leading to fines. The aim is for the Canadian government to provide the 'gold standard' for accessibility and inclusion. The UK government, through the National Strategy for Disabled People, could similarly use legislation as a catalyst for creating a more inclusive and accessible society.



**The UK government could lead the way, and learn from the example of Canada, which has introduced legislation (the Accessible Canada Act, 2019) to create a barrier free Canada**

**2) Invest in creating new disability inclusive jobs.** Through the Social Value Act 2012, national governments, local authorities and public sector bodies procuring services are required to request outsourcing providers to demonstrate how they will add social value throughout their contractual delivery. Many providers of outsourced services have offered social value through, for example, creating apprenticeships for young people. The government could lead the way by ensuring that the public sector contracts it procures involve a commitment from outsourcing organisations to increase the percentage of disabled people they recruit over the contract's lifetime.

**3) Create a disability inclusive Industrial Strategy.** The UK government's 2017 Industrial Strategy<sup>39</sup> sets out how the country can invest in innovation and future economic growth. The Industrial Strategy does not set out how disabled people can be included and contribute to this future growth, nor how major infrastructure projects, such as HS2 and the new projects announced in the Plan for Jobs, will create opportunities for disabled people. This is a missed opportunity. Disabled people are also consumers, with the 'Purple Pound' being worth an estimated £249 billion.<sup>40</sup> It is time that the UK government revises its Industrial Strategy to ensure that the national and local strategies are disability inclusive. In addition, the government could invest in innovation and create a sector deal for Assistive Technology, making the UK a world leader in the production of new products. The expertise required to innovate could create opportunities for disabled people with lived experience of using accessible and assistive technologies.

**Disabled people account for 14% of the UK's self-employed workforce**

**4) Invest in disabled entrepreneurship.** Disabled people account for 14% of the UK's self-employed workforce.<sup>41</sup> For many disabled people, self-employment provides an effective means of working flexibly, on their terms, in a job they enjoy. However, a lack of access to advice, mentoring and support often acts as a barrier to disabled entrepreneurs interested in setting up a new business. Although the government has in place programmes like New Enterprise Allowance, aiding people to set up their own business, awareness of these schemes amongst disabled people and those with long term conditions is low. In addition, New Enterprise Allowance offers support for just six months, and schemes like Access to Work are not available to support disabled people during the business planning process. The government needs to make it easier for disabled people to become self-employed entrepreneurs. Existing programmes like New Enterprise Allowance should be actively promoted to disabled people, with an offer of support from a business mentor being available for at least the first two years of a new business operating. Access to Work should also be available to disabled people in the business planning phase, to enable entrepreneurs to have the right equipment, transport and additional support to successfully plan and set up new business ventures.

**The government could invest in innovation and create a sector deal for Assistive Technology**

**5) Make rail travel fully accessible to disabled people by 2030.** Forthcoming Leonard Cheshire research in collaboration with WPI Economics highlights that investing in improving accessible rail travel for disabled people has tangible economic benefits. Based on WPI Economics' analysis, 51,000 more disabled people could be in work if they were able to access rail stations and trains as equally as non-disabled people. The government should invest in improving the accessibility of the railways, to tackle this structural barrier to disabled people living, learning and working as independently as they choose.

**51,000 more disabled people could be in work if they were able to access rail stations and trains as equally as non-disabled people**

**6) Increase visibility and transparency of how disabled people are experiencing the labour market.** There is currently a paucity of statistics to show what is happening to disabled people in the labour market. Statistics collected on benefits like UC or new schemes like furlough do not record how many disabled people are accessing them. Learning from the experiences of the Race Disparity Unit, the government should ensure that the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit takes responsibility for the statistical output of government departments. If disabled people are not visible in the statistics being collected, how can the government even start to make policy which is responsive to their needs and experiences? The National Audit Office should also continue its active role in evaluating the effectiveness of programmes like Kickstart and Disability Confident for disabled people, and hold the government to account in delivering its commitment of supporting one million more disabled people into work.<sup>42</sup> This is needed to understand how government programmes are performing in securing increased employment for disabled people and to ensure that these programmes are accountable to that aim.



## 6. Conclusion

Covid-19 has adversely affected the lives of everyone in the UK. With the number of claims for Universal Credit approaching 3 million, it is clear that the pandemic will have a significant impact on the employment of millions of people across the country. However, for those disabled people who can and want to work, the impact of the Covid-19 recession will potentially be disproportionately devastating, exacerbating the existing employment gap of around 30% between disabled people and non-disabled people. This is why the government needs to act now and create a disability inclusive economic recovery. Supporting more disabled people to find sustainable and meaningful work, retain employment, and create new jobs in the future which are disability inclusive, not only will help to create a more inclusive society, but offers businesses tangible benefits such as higher revenues for employers.

Leonard Cheshire's Plan for Jobs provides a starting point for the government to create a disability inclusive economy. Some recommendations in our plan will be easier to implement than others, with existing government policy work already underway examining changes to Statutory Sick Pay and flexible working; a commitment to introducing new employment support programmes by 2021; and new legislation being considered via the Workforce Information Bill 2019-20, which would pave the way for mandatory reporting on disability. Through the National Strategy for Disabled People the government has the incentive and mechanism to plan for a legislature to create true disability inclusion in the UK. We hope the government acts and takes advantage of this opportunity for change, so that disabled people are not further left behind by the pandemic.

**Supporting more disabled people to find sustainable and meaningful work, retain employment, and create new jobs in the future which are disability inclusive, not only will help to create a more inclusive society, but offers businesses tangible benefits such as higher revenues for employers**

## Contact

For further information on the Plan for Jobs please contact Sharlene McGee, Policy Manager (Email: [sharlene.mcgee@leonardcheshire.org](mailto:sharlene.mcgee@leonardcheshire.org)) or Gemma Hope, Director of Policy (Email: [gemma.hope@leonardcheshire.org](mailto:gemma.hope@leonardcheshire.org))

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17. Returnships are schemes generally aimed at women returning to the workplace after a career break, and are advocated for by many including the APPG for Women and Work in its 2016 report, 'Women Returners'. The government allocated £1.5 million of funding for companies to develop scheme for workplace returners in 2018.
18. Leonard Cheshire has partnered with the National Deaf Children's Society, Disability Rights UK, Mencap and other disability charities to highlight to the government how its proposals in the Plan for Jobs could be made more inclusive to disabled young people: [www.tes.com/news/disabled-young-people-could-be-left-behind](http://www.tes.com/news/disabled-young-people-could-be-left-behind)
19. The German Kurzarbeit scheme provides employers with subsidies for employees who cannot work their normal working hours due to the pandemic, enabling people to keep their jobs. The scheme was introduced during the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, and was credited for helping reduce the number of redundancies firms had to make during this time: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/business-53918560](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/business-53918560)
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37. [www.gov.uk/government/news/a-national-strategy-for-disabled-people-to-remove-barriers-and-increase-participation](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-national-strategy-for-disabled-people-to-remove-barriers-and-increase-participation)
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