



A report by Gareth Bacon AM

# Employ – ability: The Disability Employment Gap in London

London should be a place where everyone can benefit from its opportunities and achieve their full potential but, unfortunately, this is not always the case for disabled people.

Businesses and organisations want to attract the best skills and talents to our city; however, the current employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people shows that we have a way to go.

October 2018

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## Executive Summary

London should be a place where everyone can benefit from its opportunities and achieve their full potential but, unfortunately, this is not always the case for disabled people. Businesses and organisations want to attract the best skills and talents to our city; however, the current employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people shows that we have a way to go.

Disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people.<sup>1</sup> One in five employers say they would be less likely to employ a disabled person.<sup>2</sup> By the age of 26, disabled people are four times more likely to be out of work or not in education compared to non-disabled people.<sup>3</sup> These are neither figures to be proud of nor complacent about, and we need to take bold action to not only address the problem, but to also change engrained working cultures that have resulted in the gap barely moving an inch in the last decade.

Tackling this gap is not only important morally, but also economically. Sustained employment is shown to increase the health and wellbeing of disabled people, and means that more people can contribute to the strength of our economy. A step-change in the rate of disabled

employment could also result in significant monetary benefits for the Exchequer. However, awareness and understanding amongst employers of the benefits of hiring a disabled person remains relatively low, and their commitment is crucial to addressing this problem.

This is not just about finding jobs for disabled people; we need to help them to stay in work and enjoy meaningful and fulfilling careers. Real change will not happen without a coordinated and multi-disciplinary approach from government, employers and other stakeholders, along with disabled people themselves.

The Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Mayor should show leadership on this issue and act by example. There are no quick solutions, but there are some ways in which City Hall could make its contribution to narrowing this gap in London once and for all.

## Recommendations

This report calls for the Mayor of London to:

- **Convene a working group on the disability employment gap with relevant and expert stakeholders**, including charities, disabled workers and non-workers, support services, GLA and

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<sup>1</sup> *Disability Facts and Figures 2018* report, The Papworth Trust, page 7: <https://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/news-and->

[blogs/new-report-highlights-crucial-challenges-still-facing-disabled-people/](https://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/news-and-blogs/new-report-highlights-crucial-challenges-still-facing-disabled-people/).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

government representatives, and employers. The working group should be tasked with assessing the current state of play in London in relation to the disability employment gap, identifying challenges to tackling the gap, and constructing specific next steps, with measurable outcomes and deadlines.

- **Coordinate an apprenticeship programme** for young disabled people aged 19-22 with employers. This would begin as a pilot for one year with a small number of young people and employers. Its impact would then be assessed, including the rate of retention, before committing to any further years. Any necessary funding would come from the devolved Adult Education Budget.
- **Run an online campaign for employers** to raise awareness about the benefits of employing a disabled person and what help is on offer to assist them.
- **Use and expand his London Healthy Workplace Charter** to help employers address the disability employment gap in their own organisations.
- **Direct appropriate changes within the GLA itself by:**
  - promoting the problem of the disability employment gap with staff via internal communication channels;
  - organising an internal disability self-identification campaign to encourage those with a disability to be open about their condition;
  - communicating with existing disabled GLA employees and asking about their experiences and agreeing action points to address any negative feedback;
  - identifying disability champions in the GLA and each of its functional bodies, who are required to report on best practice and progress in their teams on at least a biannual basis.
  - ensuring that the GLA and its functional bodies pledge to collect data on their disability employment gap and work to tackle it, in line with his Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

## Introduction

Supporting disabled Londoners into work and retaining them in the workplace should be a fundamental part of achieving

a sustainable and thriving economy for our city. The disability employment gap in London has remained static for some time, and does not currently show signs of significant movement. It has been demonstrated that inclusive and diverse workplaces lead to enlarged business outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is in the interest of all of us to work collaboratively to narrow this gap.

A broad range of stakeholders, including charities, national and regional government, support services, and research bodies, have analysed the possible reasons for this gap and what can be usefully done to tackle it. However, progress remains disappointingly slow, and there are stark barriers preventing advancement on this issue. Research by Leonard Cheshire found that of line managers who are less likely to employ a disabled person, 73 percent would be concerned they would struggle to do the job.<sup>5</sup> This is not only a challenge to increase numbers, but also to change longstanding misconceptions.

It is welcome that the Mayor has pledged his support 'to create a truly inclusive London'<sup>6</sup>, and wants to work towards removing 'the barriers

that can prevent people from entering employment'.<sup>7</sup> While action is needed on a city-wide level, more can be done within the GLA itself to make its contribution to increasing the number of disabled people in work.

This is an ambitious and long-term target that will require a coordinated step-change in approach from employers, government, and organisations who support disabled people. Achieving an inclusive economy means embracing the skills of those who find it more difficult than most to access the opportunities that London has to offer. London is the proud heartbeat of the UK's economy; it is crucial that we lead by example and harness the talents of disabled people for the benefit of us all.

### What is the disability employment gap?

The disability employment gap is the difference between the employment rate of working age non-disabled people and working age disabled people, with working age defined as 16-64 years old.<sup>8</sup> Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is defined as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [one's]

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<sup>4</sup> *Delivering Through Diversity*, McKinsey and Company, January 2018, pages 1-2: [www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity\\_full-report.ashx](http://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity_full-report.ashx).

<sup>5</sup> <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/work-and-pensions-committee/assistive-technology/written/77247.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*, May 2018, page 5: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mayors-equality-diversity-inclusion-strategy.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, page 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Disability Employment Gap*, House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, February 2017, page 5: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmworpen/56/56.pdf>.

ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.<sup>9</sup> Under the Act, there is a duty for employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled workers.<sup>10</sup>

### What is the scale of the problem in London?

London is a hotbed of vibrant economic activity, and its workers play an integral role in contributing to its success. Our capital had a total employment rate of 74.8 percent in June-August 2018, and has benefited from steady and sustained growth over the past 7-8 years.<sup>11</sup> London has a lot to offer for those who live and work here, yet disabled people are one group who are falling through the net.

Scope estimates that the national gap has remained almost constant for a decade,<sup>12</sup> and London does not buck that trend. In 2017, the disability employment gap in London stood at 27 percent, marginally lower than the UK rate of 27.9 percent.<sup>13</sup> Proportionally, this means that 27 percent fewer working age disabled people were in employment than their non-disabled counterparts. Men appear harder hit, with a rate of 30 percent compared to 23 percent for women.<sup>14</sup> It is

estimated that if London continued the same flat trajectory, the gap would still be above 35 percentage points by 2025.<sup>15</sup>

Disabled people are not only more likely to be unemployed, but also more likely to be economically inactive, meaning that they are not actively seeking work. The economic inactivity rate in London amongst disabled people is 42.6 percent compared to 17.6 percent amongst non-disabled people.<sup>16</sup> Having a disability is directly linked to economic inactivity,<sup>17</sup> which could create a vicious circle: if disabled people are not looking for a job because of their disability, the employment gap is unlikely to significantly change.

The Social Market Foundation (SMF) highlights the variation in the gap across the UK, with some areas experiencing a relatively low gap and others rising to up to 80 percentage points.<sup>18</sup> The same report highlights the significant differences across the boroughs in London; Lewisham and Richmond-upon-Thames have employment rates over 60 percent, whereas Hackney and

<sup>9</sup> Equality Act 2010: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/employment-rates>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.scope.org.uk/About-Us/Media/Press-releases/May-2018-\(1\)/Disability-employment-gap-has-barely-changed-in-a](https://www.scope.org.uk/About-Us/Media/Press-releases/May-2018-(1)/Disability-employment-gap-has-barely-changed-in-a).

<sup>13</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/employment-gaps>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> *Supporting Disabled People Into Work*, Social Market Foundation, May 2018, page 5:

<http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Supporting-disabled-people-into-work-a-view-from-London.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/economic-inactivity>

<sup>17</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/insights/why-are-people-economically-inactive/>.

<sup>18</sup> *Supporting Disabled People Into Work*, page 3.

Newham fall below 40 percent.<sup>19</sup>

These figures present a complex picture in London which will require a combination of solutions at all levels of government. As the regional government for London, the GLA and the Mayor are well placed to lead on this issue from the front.

### What is being done now?

The Government has pledged to increase the number of disabled people in employment by 1 million by 2027, and most recently launched a dedicated £4.2 million challenge fund to support people with mental health or musculoskeletal conditions to stay in work – one of several initiatives dedicated to fulfilling this pledge.<sup>20</sup> This built on the ‘work, health and disability green paper’ in 2016, which was developed between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Health and Social Care.<sup>21</sup> This commitment is laudable and it is heartening to see this issue progressing at the top layer of government, but it is equally important to be pushing at a city level to drive local change.

The Mayor’s existing plans to improve the world of work for everyone are welcome.

Through the Good Work Standard, the Mayor is looking to explore how to achieve high standards in all areas of employment.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, through the London Healthy Workplace Charter, the Mayor is aiming to provide advice for employers to make their workplaces healthier and happier.<sup>23</sup> So far, 225 organisations have been accredited with the Charter.<sup>24</sup>

To maximise the impact of the Charter, the Mayor should look at targeted ways of integrating the issue of the disability employment gap. For example, this could include guidance to employers on how to assess the gap in their own organisation, how to provide bespoke support for disabled employees, and advice on delivering reasonable adjustments for those who require them. This would be a pro-active step to build on existing work to deliver greater results, as well as assisting employers to address the problem in their own organisations.

Additionally, many of the organisations currently signed up to the Charter appear to be from the public sector. It would be welcome if the Mayor encouraged more private sector organisations to sign up, including the FTSE 100, to make the most of the Charter initiative. The Mayor

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pages 5 and 6.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-fund-to-help-tackle-the-disability-employment-gap-launched>.

<sup>21</sup> *Work, health and disability: improving lives*, October 2016:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data)

<ta/file/564038/work-and-health-green-paper-improving-lives.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/making-london-best-city-world-work>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/health/healthy-workplace-charter>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

should consider a ‘name and shame’ scheme for those who do not sign up, in order to encourage London’s biggest businesses to be a leading light on this issue.

### What is the situation in the GLA?

The data below shows a varying picture across the GLA family:<sup>25</sup>

	Number of disclosed disabled employees (% of whole organisation)	Number of disclosed non-disabled employees (% of whole organisation)	Number of employees who are undisclosed (% of whole organisation)	Number of applications in 2017 by those who declared a disability (% of total)	Disability employment gap for all employees
The Greater London Authority (GLA)	41 (4.4%)	776 (83.7%)	110 (11.8%)	273 (total unknown)	Not known by the GLA
Transport for London (TfL)	563 (2.1%)	13,313 (49.4%)	12,463 (46.3%)	2,968 (2.7%)	8.9%
Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)	8	86	-	23 (7.6%)	Not known by MOPAC
London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)	10	132	-	6 (total unknown)	Not known by LLDC
London Fire Brigade (LFB)	365 (6.5%)	5219 (93.5%)	-	Not known	Not known by LFB.

Unexpectedly, TfL is the only body within the GLA group to hold actual data on its disability employment gap, and its gap is lower than the London average. It is unsurprising that the number of non-disabled employees vastly outstrips the number of disabled employees in each body, and although the bodies have subtle differences, the pattern of a relatively low number of disabled applicants prevails in each data-set.

Neither MOPAC nor LLDC hold specific data on their disability employment gap. MOPAC stated that ‘there is currently no information available on MOPAC’s disability employment gap’, and LLDC

stated that it does ‘not currently record this information, however there are plans to do so in the future’. Both the GLA and LFB confused the ‘disability employment gap’ with the ‘disability pay gap’ in their response, potentially indicating a lack of understanding about the term itself.

The Mayor has laid out the priorities of the GLA functional bodies in his Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy,<sup>26</sup> but this data demonstrates that there is still a way to go if the GLA is to lead the charge on this issue. It is not wholly encouraging that the GLA and its functional bodies are patchy in collecting this data and are even sometimes confused over the definitions involved. In line with his Strategy, the Mayor should ensure that the GLA and its functional bodies pledge to collect this data in future, and work to tackle its organisational disability employment gap, particularly if it is below the London average (currently 27 percent).

### Why is it beneficial to tackle the gap?

Getting and retaining disabled people in sustainable employment is not only beneficial for them on an individual level, but is also hugely advantageous for the local and wider economy and for employers themselves.

<sup>25</sup> FOI request, October 2018.

<sup>26</sup> *The Mayor’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*, page 145-150.



## Positive for the individual

There is a great deal of research supporting the notion that work correlates to better physical and mental health and wellbeing.<sup>27</sup> A report for the Office for Disability Issues states that over nine in ten disabled people in work agreed that work ‘keeps them active, gives them financial independence, enables them to meet new people, and makes them feel as if they are contributing to society.’<sup>28</sup> In contrast, unemployment is linked to poorer health, and the prevalence of mental health conditions varies by employment status.<sup>29</sup>

Unemployment is often not a reluctance to work, but rather a difficulty finding appropriate employment for a person’s needs, qualifications and experience. Approximately 374,000 working age Londoners are out of work and living with a health condition or disability that limits their capability to work, and of this total number, analysis by the SMF indicates that only 155,000 actually want to work.<sup>30</sup> Of those who do not want to work, they are likely to present with other characteristics that make it difficult for them to thrive in

the workplace, such as low or no qualifications, mental health conditions, or work-limiting conditions.<sup>31</sup> For instance, nearly three quarters of disabled people who are not currently seeking work have either low (less than GCSE level) or no formal qualifications.<sup>32</sup>

Disabled people are also twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no qualifications, and only two thirds as likely to have qualifications at level 4 and above.<sup>33</sup> The Assembly’s Education Panel highlighted in a recent report that more can be done during education to alleviate problems later in a disabled person’s life, and it called on the Mayor to provide more support for young people as they exit the school system and move into the world of work.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, tackling the disability employment gap in a sustainable way is a longer term challenge than just securing jobs, but boosting employment rates is a good starting point.

## Positive for the economy

Increasing employment amongst disabled people also creates a significant positive economic impact. In 2016,

<sup>27</sup> *Is Work Good For Your Health and Wellbeing*, Gordon Waddell and A Kim Burton, 2006: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/214326/hwwb-is-work-good-for-you.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214326/hwwb-is-work-good-for-you.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> *Experiences and Expectations of Disabled People*, Williams et al, 2008, page 102: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.599.4851&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/644090/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644090/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> *Supporting Disabled People Into Work*, page 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, page 17.

<sup>33</sup> *Disability and skills in a changing economy*, briefing paper series by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, September 2011, page v: [http://www.oph.fi/download/140962\\_equality-disability.pdf](http://www.oph.fi/download/140962_equality-disability.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> The London Assembly Education Panel, *Together: Transforming the lives of children and young people with special education needs and disabilities in London*, July 2018, page 7: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london\\_assembly\\_send\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_send_report_final.pdf).

London accounted for 22.5 percent of the UK's GVA<sup>35</sup>, demonstrating the huge contribution that the capital makes to the national economy. Using Department for Work and Pensions data analysis, the SMF estimates that the economic impact of the current size of the disability employment gap could be up to £1 billion per year in London, caused by the number of working age disabled people who are currently out of work.<sup>36</sup>

On a national level, one estimate puts the total economic cost of lost output and extra health costs among working age people at around £100 billion a year.<sup>37</sup> These costs are largely owing to lost tax revenues, sickness absence, increased NHS costs associated with economic inactivity, and informal care-giving by those looking after unemployed working age disabled people.<sup>38</sup> Even increasing the national employment rate amongst disabled adults below pension age by just five percentage points would mean that, by 2030, the Exchequer would gain £6 billion. A ten percentage point rise would result in a £12 billion gain.<sup>39</sup> London is the economic powerhouse of the UK; by not

addressing this issue here, it is resulting in substantial economic ramification for both businesses and individuals.

The effect of a person being out of work is considerable, and has a dramatic impact on someone's financial independence and standard of living. In contrast, steady employment gives an individual their own income and financial security, whilst also making tax contributions to the Exchequer. In 2011, the Government spent £7 billion on out-of-work benefits for disabled people.<sup>40</sup> If a disabled person is in sustained and meaningful employment, they are likely to be claiming less in welfare and other benefits.

Evidence demonstrates that disabled people are already facing a pay gap in employment, let alone the effects of when they are out of work. In 2017, the mean hourly pay in London was £19.30 for a non-disabled person and £16.79 for a disabled person – a pay gap of 13 percent.<sup>41</sup> Disabled people are often stuck working beneath their potential in contrast to their non-disabled peers, so it is worrying that there may be a pay disincentive preventing

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<sup>35</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cin-note-57\\_gva\\_2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cin-note-57_gva_2018_final.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> *Supporting Disabled People Into Work*, page 12.

<sup>37</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/644090/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644090/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-data-pack.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Enabling Work: disabled people, employment, and the UK economy*, Scope, Jenny Gulliford,

May 2015, page 5:

[https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Landman\\_Report.PDF?ext=.pdf](https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Landman_Report.PDF?ext=.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> *Working Better: The Perfect Partnership – workplace solutions for disabled people and business*, The Equality and Human Rights Commission, May 2012, page 6:

[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/working\\_better.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/working_better.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/disability-pay-gaps>

disabled people from seeking work.

### Positive for employers

A greater proportion of disabled workers is advantageous for an employer and for their organisation. Employing those with a disability can increase the pool of talented and high-quality employees in an organisation, and bring additional skills to the business that may not be available elsewhere.<sup>42</sup>

There is a common misconception that making reasonable adjustments for a disabled person is costly and time consuming. Regarding learning disabilities, Mencap found that 5 percent of around 2,000 employers said the financial effects of accommodations for employing people with a learning disability were cost neutral, and £75 is the average adjustment cost for employing a person with a learning disability.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, 97 percent of the employers surveyed by Mencap said they were likely to hire people with a learning disability again.<sup>44</sup> Clearly, boosting the awareness of these benefits amongst employers will be crucial to instigating real change.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions>.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/learning-disability-week/benefits-involved/learning-disability-week/benefits-involved-people-learning-disability>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

The Government's Disability Confident Scheme has specifically targeted businesses to employ more disabled people, and John Lewis, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's are amongst the retailers who have joined so far.<sup>45</sup> Sainsbury's report that the scheme has allowed them to share their experiences and advice with other retailers to provide employment opportunities for those with a disability and increase the confidence of organisations to employ them.

It is similarly worrying that disabled people are missing out on economic opportunity from an early stage, which has a knock-on effect on the talent that employers can attract. Disabled Londoners have lower apprenticeship participation rates than their counterparts from across the country.<sup>46</sup> A paltry 0.8 percent of 16-64 year olds in London started an apprenticeship in 2015/16, which is also lower than other areas of the UK.<sup>47</sup>

The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy commits to prioritising the needs of those Londoners who could benefit from gaining more skills, including disabled people, when the Adult Education Budget (AEB) is devolved to the Mayor from 2019/20.<sup>48</sup> The Adult Education Budget funds adult education

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.drapersonline.com/news/john-lewis-and-ms-sign-up-to-government-disability-campaign/7028897.article>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>.

<sup>47</sup> *The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*, page 73.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, page 74.

services to provide adults with the skills they need to enter the labour market, to help them progress in work or for other learning.<sup>49</sup> As it has not yet been decided how the Budget will be allocated, it would be a timely opportunity for the Mayor to prioritise this issue in his discussions.

The Mayor could allocate funding from the AEB to coordinate a bespoke apprenticeship programme for young disabled Londoners aged 19-22 years old. The aim of this programme would be to engage with these workers at an early stage, harness their faith in the employment system, and establish and address their needs quickly. As this would be a new programme, it would be piloted for one year with 4-6 young people. Its success rate would then be assessed, including feedback from apprentices and employers and whether the apprentice stayed in employment. If the cost of the programme exceeds the expected allocation from within the AEB, the difference could be made up from the Mayor's £9 million increase in his culture budget.<sup>50</sup>

The Mayor has identified in his Skills for Londoners framework that he wants to make the AEB 'outcomes-focused', including

supporting Londoners into work through apprenticeships.<sup>51</sup> The Mayor has the opportunity to incorporate this idea into his AEB devolution plans where the GLA would coordinate, administer and market the scheme, and the employers would pay the salaries of the apprentices.

In their recent report on young Londoners with special educational needs and disabilities, the Assembly's Education Panel called for the Mayor to 'lead an audit of possible suitable posts within the GLA and functional bodies to identify a number of supported internship opportunities' and 'encourage more large organisations to come forward as "willing employers" able to commit to setting up supported internships.'<sup>52</sup> The Mayor could use his findings to inform the apprenticeship programme, including identifying suitable employers to take part in the scheme.

This could be a constructive way for employers to pilot the employment of a disabled apprentice, take the opportunity to share positive experiences with one another, and spread awareness of the benefits of a more inclusive workforce.

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<sup>49</sup> Department for Education, Adult education budget funding and performance management rules for the 2016 to 2017 funding year (1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017).

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s71634/Proposed%20Changes%20to%20the%20GLA%20Establishment%20-%20Culture%20and%20Creative%20Industries%20Unit.pdf>, paragraph 5.3.

<sup>51</sup> Mayor of London, Skills for Londoners framework, working draft, July 2018, page 6: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018\\_07\\_17\\_framework\\_final\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_07_17_framework_final_for_publication.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> The London Assembly Education Panel, *Together: Transforming the lives of children and young people with special education needs and disabilities in London*, July 2018, page 9: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london\\_assembly\\_send\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_send_report_final.pdf).

## Working with employers

The role of employers is fundamental in driving organisational and cultural change. As 83 percent of people acquire their disability when in work<sup>53</sup>, employers have a specific vested interest to ensure that they are prepared and accommodating to disabled workers.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has argued that simple steps could be taken by employers to make the workplace a more comfortable and accessible place for disabled people, including more supportive managers, flexible working, and support and understanding from colleagues.<sup>54</sup> Research has suggested that under three in ten of those who had ever left a job for reasons connected with their disability felt that they could have stayed in that workplace if support, adaptations or adjustments had been made.<sup>55</sup>

More flexible working can only be a positive step for disabled people, so long as they have the chance to make their break in the first place. The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee highlighted in their report on

the disability employment gap that many employers do not yet acknowledge or appreciate the value of disabled colleagues, yet this could be a good opportunity for employers to engage.<sup>56</sup> Unemployment in London is low at 5.2 percent<sup>57</sup>, and the Committee suggests that this should in turn increase employers' demand for the talents and skills of disabled people.<sup>58</sup>

The Committee also stated in their report that 'employers may need additional financial support and incentives to take on disabled people, and a great many could benefit from access to more practical, tailored, specialist advice at the point of need'.<sup>59</sup>

The emergence of innovative technology could be a game-changer for disabled people in the workplace, yet the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee found that employer awareness of assistive technologies can be an obstacle to disability employment.<sup>60</sup> The Committee suggests that more can be done to raise employer awareness of the benefits of technology, which can often be acquired at little or no additional cost.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>53</sup>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>.

<sup>54</sup> *Working Better: The Perfect Partnership*, page 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Experiences and Expectations of Disabled People*, page 115.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, page 4.

<sup>57</sup>

[https://data.london.gov.uk/apps\\_and\\_analysis/labour-market-update-for-london-june-2018/](https://data.london.gov.uk/apps_and_analysis/labour-market-update-for-london-june-2018/).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>59</sup> *Disability Employment Gap*, House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, page

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<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmworpen/56/56.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee report on *Assistive Technology*, March 2018, page 4:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/673/673.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee report on *Assistive Technology*, March 2018, page 4:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/673/673.pdf>.

An example of an assistive technology solution for disabled people seeking work is Brain in Hand. It is a cloud-based programme, which allows the user to access individualised support from their phone when they need it.<sup>62</sup> Users can then access personalised help with potentially difficult or stressful situations at the touch of a button. According to their own research, 94 per cent of users report that it is having a positive impact on their life, 88 percent cope better with problems and feel more confident, and 100 percent say Brain in Hand provides them with help when they need it.<sup>63</sup>

Transparency is also crucial in building the confidence of disabled people within their organisations. Barclays aims to be 'the most accessible and inclusive FTSE 100 company' and have a dedicated internship programme for those of all ages with disabilities, Able to Enable.<sup>64</sup> They also have an internal campaign, This is Me, to encourage disclosure of disabilities and mental health conditions within the workplace.<sup>65</sup> They have seen a 4 percent increase in two years of people disclosing their conditions;<sup>66</sup> this relatively low rise shows the scale of the challenge yet to come, but demonstrates a step in the right direction. It is clear that

disabled people need to have faith that disclosing their condition will not be detrimental to their role, and that there will be subsequent constructive adjustments.

We have seen that there can be some reticence amongst employers to hire disabled people, and part of the problem could be a lack of awareness. To ameliorate this, City Hall could run an online campaign, targeted at a range of employers across the city, to raise awareness and recognition of the benefits of employing a disabled person. This would be via social media channels and the GLA website. The campaign could also highlight the support and guidance on offer for employers when they are seeking to create an inclusive working environment.

The Mayor has a vast array of communication tools at his disposal, and he could promote these materials across London and hopefully reach hundreds of employers in the process. It may also be helpful to carry out quantitative research after six months to assess the success of the campaign, and whether any improvements should be made. As this campaign is online, costs are likely to be negligible, as existing staff resource would be used. However, if costs were

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<sup>62</sup> <http://braininhand.co.uk/what-is-brain-in-hand/>

<sup>63</sup> <http://braininhand.co.uk/who-we-help/supporting-you-at-work/>

<sup>64</sup> Barclays response to the Government green paper, *Improving Lives - The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper*.

<https://www.home.barclays/content/dam/bar>

[clayspublic/docs/Citizenship/public-policy/Department%20for%20Work%20and%20Pensions%20and%20Department%20of%20Health%20Improving%20Lives.%20the%20work,%20health%20and%20disability%20green%20paper.docx](https://www.home.barclays/content/dam/barclayspublic/docs/Citizenship/public-policy/Department%20for%20Work%20and%20Pensions%20and%20Department%20of%20Health%20Improving%20Lives.%20the%20work,%20health%20and%20disability%20green%20paper.docx)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

incurred, this could be allocated from the increase in the budget for the GLA's external affairs team, which has grown £1.6 million since the last Mayor's final year in office.<sup>67</sup>

### Best practice in London

There are examples of best practice within London itself, which can be used by others to measure and benchmark progress and drive standards across the city.

- The Shaw Trust Community Hubs Pilot was created in September 2014 in Hackney and Lewisham as a one-stop shop for employment and wellbeing support for the disabled.<sup>68</sup> They have found that an integrated service has improved communication between teams and job-seekers, and has led to an increase in job sustainability and people finding work more quickly.
- Some boroughs across London are piloting and establishing specific programmes to support people with mental health conditions into work. For example, the Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies

programme aims to provide support to people experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties. So far, across London, this scheme has supported 60,000 people and 2,300 people have come off benefits or sick pay.

- London Boroughs launched a £135 million employment programme in March 2018, match-funded from the European Social Fund via the GLA, to provide specific support for disabled Londoners, those with long-term health conditions, and those who have been out of work for more than two years.<sup>69</sup> This is an encouraging step for London, and demonstrates cross-borough coordination to achieve better and more specialist services for those who need it.

### What more can the Mayor and the GLA do?

The Mayor can act as a key convening figure on this particular issue to bring services together, and get buy-in from relevant stakeholders, with the extra support of the London Assembly and the GLA.

<sup>67</sup>

[https://www.glaconservatives.co.uk/uploads/1/1/7/8/117899427/final\\_cost\\_of\\_khan\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.glaconservatives.co.uk/uploads/1/1/7/8/117899427/final_cost_of_khan_2_.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> *More than words: Rethinking employment support for disabled jobseekers*, WPI Economics, Matthew Oakley, October 2016, page 7: [www.wpieconomics.com/site/wp-](http://www.wpieconomics.com/site/wp-)

[content/uploads/2017/05/More-than-words-report-into-the-disability-employment-gap\\_0-1.pdf](https://www.localgov.co.uk/-135m-employment-support-programme-launched/44835).

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.localgov.co.uk/-135m-employment-support-programme-launched/44835>.

Disabled employees are able to flourish in the workplace if they are provided with the appropriate support, which should be as tailored as possible and integrated with their specific needs. This is not an easy task, and this is an area where the Mayor could use his powers within London to instigate a conversation about what this support could look like.

The Mayor could instigate a series of roundtable discussions with a variety of stakeholders closely connected to this area, who would analyse the current problem in London and find ways to address it. The roundtables could include charities (small, medium and large), disabled workers and non-workers, support services, GLA and government representatives, and employers (of all sizes). The working group should do several things: assess the current state of play in London, gather primary feedback from disabled people and their experiences in obtaining and retaining work, identify challenges that need to be overcome to tackle the gap, and construct specific next steps with attached measurable outcomes and deadlines. This would be a beneficial first step in establishing progress on this issue within City Hall, and the Mayor could report his progress to the Assembly on a regular basis.

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<https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/ieList/Documents.aspx?CId=254&MId=6423&Ver=4>

The GLA proudly leads the way on many aspects of employee inclusivity and flexibility, most recently introducing a specific parental leave for employees who have a child requiring neonatal care.<sup>70</sup> The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy rightly emphasises that a lack of flexibility can often be a barrier to a disabled person accessing employment.<sup>71</sup> It therefore seems a timely opportunity for the GLA and the Mayor to demonstrate commitment on this issue and drive change from within the GLA itself.

The GLA could carry out several simple steps to improving the experience and uptake of disabled employees, including:

- promoting the problem of the disability employment gap with staff via internal communication channels. This would increase staff and colleague awareness of the issue, as well as promoting what the GLA is doing to approach the problem of the gap;
- asking HR to organise an internal disability self-identification campaign to encourage those with a disability to be open about their conditions. Evidence demonstrates that transparency and openness in a workplace

<sup>71</sup> *The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*, page 88.



- can create a more inclusive culture;
- communicating with existing disabled GLA employees and asking about their experiences. They should undertake a survey collating their feedback on the GLA as an employer, including views on flexible working. Action points should be agreed to address any negative feedback and taken forward by a senior representative, for example the Chief Officer;
- appointing disability champions in the GLA and each of its functional bodies. These individuals would promote this issue on a more molecular level, and they would be required to report on best practice and progress in their teams on at least a biannual basis.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

To conclude, London currently has a stubbornly high disability employment gap that will only serve to detrimentally affect both the lives and wellbeing of disabled people and the wider economy. There are clear benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace, which in turn creates stronger economic outcomes for businesses, individuals and the Exchequer.

Both the Mayor and City Hall can do more to narrow this gap for the benefit of London and its workers. Simple and uncomplicated steps can be taken by both the GLA and its functional bodies and the Mayor himself to drive this issue forwards and make real progress.

As a summary, this report urges the Mayor to undertake the following recommendations:

- **Convene a working group on the disability employment gap with relevant and expert stakeholders** to establish the current state of play in London and suggest ways to address the problem on a local level.
- **Coordinate an apprenticeship programme** for young disabled people to give them access to a meaningful employment opportunity at an early stage in their lives.
- **Run an online campaign for employers** to raise awareness about the benefits of employing a disabled person.
- **Use and expand his London Healthy Workplace Charter** to help employers address their own disability employment gaps.

- **Direct appropriate changes within the GLA and its functional bodies**, focusing on inclusion, communication and championing the contributions of its disabled staff.