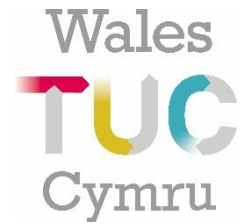


Wales TUC disability and 'hidden' impairments campaign – 'campaign asks'



The Wales TUC recently undertook a piece of research which focused on attitudes towards and experiences of disability in the workplace (including the experiences of disabled workers with 'invisible' impairments). The survey received more than 1000 responses. A full report of the survey findings can be found here www.tuc.org.uk/DHIWsurveyreport. The research showed that there is much more that needs to be done to improve the situation for disabled workers.

Analysis of the findings of the survey highlighted a number of actions that could be taken to reduce the barriers faced by disabled workers and bring about greater disability equality.

As part of the Wales TUC campaign on disability and 'hidden' impairments, the Wales TUC has published a full report of the survey findings, alongside recommendations for employers and an action plan for the trade union movement in Wales.

The research also identified several actions that the Wales TUC believes should be taken by Welsh Government and the UK government to improve the situation for disabled people in Wales as follows:

Actions sought from Welsh Government

Promote a national awareness raising campaign

The findings of our survey indicate that there is a need for a national awareness raising campaign, aimed at both employers and the general public, to challenge stereotypes about disabled people, raise awareness of the social model of disability, help disabled people recognise their rights, tackle disability discrimination, challenge myths and stigma and highlight the fact that not all impairments are visible.

A campaign developed in consultation with disabled people which could be promoted widely through all forms of media, highlighting real life stories, positive case studies and role models and pull together best practice guidance for employers, links to information on legal rights, Access to Work funding, benefits, disability organisations, unions and employment support services. The campaign could include media, arts, culture and sports organisations in Wales to promote greater participation and the accurate portrayal of all disabled people in the media, culture, arts and sports at all levels in Wales.

Work through social partnership structures to ensure appropriate guidance to devolved public sector employers

Ensure that devolved public sector employers work closely with unions to make sure that all existing policies impacting on disabled workers take account of the social model and are fit for purpose in terms of supporting disability equality in the workplace.

Highlight good practice in terms of the implementation and monitoring of relevant policies such as the effective implementation of reasonable adjustments (including adjustments linked to disability-related sickness absence) and the provision of effective, regular mandatory disability equality

training (based on the social model of disability) for all managers and staff to ensure proper understanding of disability. Promote positive action schemes where disabled people are underrepresented to help reduce the disability employment gap.

Consider organisations' employment practices regarding disability equality when making funding and procurement decisions

Ensure that evidence of organisations' commitment to working with unions and disabled workers to support disability equality in the workplace forms part of the criteria for all applications for Welsh Government funding and grants and also part of all tenders for procurement contracts in the devolved public sector.

Establish and promote a national training standard for workplaces based on the social model of disability for employers and service providers

Training based on the social model is essential if government, employers and service providers are to eliminate discrimination from their practice and achieve equality and inclusion for disabled people. Work with disabled people to establish a national training standard for workplace disability equality training for Wales based on the social model of disability and highlighting the specific issues linked to 'invisible' impairments. The training standard should be promoted widely to employers and service providers and monitored through engagement with disabled people.

Establish a national action plan to close the disability pay gap and improve information gathering and reporting on progress towards disability equality in the workplace

Respondents identified a clear need for better monitoring and auditing of disability equality in the workplace to create pressure for improvement and to measure how effective policies are in practice.

A national action plan to close the disability pay gap in Wales is needed. Progress towards this goal could also be achieved in part by extending the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales to improve employment information collection and reporting on disabled workers in devolved public sector workplaces. For example, a more detailed breakdown of disabled workers by job, pay, contract type and work pattern compared to non-disabled workers (as per the explicit requirement for reporting on differences between men and women) and a requirement to publish a disability pay objective (in a similar way to the requirement to publish a gender pay objective) could be brought in.

Close other 'data gaps' that exist on disability equality in the workplace in Wales

Explore ways to close 'data gaps' that exist more widely across workplaces in Wales to improve Wales specific research, data and analysis on issues such as the disability employment gap and disability pay gap. This could be collated for Wales as a whole and broken down by different industries, sectors and regions.

Encourage greater inclusion of disabled people in apprenticeship schemes

Take steps to raise awareness of apprenticeships among disabled people and the parents of disabled people, promote apprenticeship role models including people with disabilities and raise awareness of support available.

Actions sought from UK Government

Review of all UK legislation impacting on disabled people

All laws impacting on disabled people (including the Equality Act) should be reviewed and amended to make them compliant with the obligations under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Equality Act should be amended to include a proper interpretation of the duty to provide reasonable adjustments. Other changes that could help reduce disability discrimination in the workplace include reinstatement of the power of tribunals to make wider recommendations, the reintroduction of the statutory equality questionnaire and the duty on employers to protect workers from third-party harassment (such as harassment from service users and customers).

A BSL Act should be introduced to give full legal recognition to British Sign Language in the UK. Legal status would ensure that information and services would be produced in BSL, therefore giving equal access.

Better funding for the Access to Work fund

The cost of adjustments is usually small but some can be more expensive. The UK government should end caps on Access to Work grants and provide a significant increase in the budget combined with a programme to inform both employers and disabled people of its availability, as many employers still remain ignorant of the scheme. The TUC believes that Access to Work is cost effective and increasing its budget significantly would benefit everyone: disabled people, employers, and the government's income from tax.

Effective 'work programmes'

To address the disability employment gap, the TUC has called for sustained UK government support for a voluntary programme designed to prepare disabled people who want to work for the workplace with ongoing support where needed.

A fair benefits system

The current system for assessing eligibility for disability benefits has been repeatedly shown to be unfit for purpose and in some cases discriminatory. Reductions in the amount of benefit received and the numbers of people receiving them are making many disabled people poorer. The right approach is to design a new assessment process by working with representatives of disabled people to ensure the result is fair. Benefits should be properly funded to ensure that disabled people are not forced to live in poverty.

Extend the full range of statutory employment rights to all workers, regardless of employment status or type of contract

Lift the level of the employment rights 'floor', extending existing rights to all those in work, not only those who qualify for 'employee' status. This includes protection from unfair dismissal and the right to redundancy pay. This could help disabled workers, particularly those in insecure work who may be concerned about job security, feel more able to disclose their disability and request reasonable adjustments. Decent and secure work is also better for people's overall health and wellbeing.