

Dear Strategy Unit

I would like to offer some feedback on the Analytical Report about improving the life chances of disabled people. Please confirm that you have received this.

It's good to see that the government departments are finally tackling the fundamental issues about quality of life from their different perspectives. They don't use the same language but they have a common agenda; they are almost there but still missing some absolute basics.

This particular document (the summary) is short and easy to read. It contains a lot of common sense and it has visual appeal so it's easy on the eye and helps people to concentrate on the main points. There are some omissions and also it needs greater emphasis on the fact that disability is nearly always acquired, not necessarily congenital. It arises through illness, injury or social conditioning, not from a physical or mental lack which can usually be overcome by medical or technical aids nowadays.

The problem is in society, and disability is something that develops over time, quite often as people get older through their life experiences, especially in the workplace. It is stress that does it. It catches us at our weakest point and puts us out of action for a while, sometimes permanently if no-one steps in to stop it.

This report contains a glimmer of hope. Whoever included the description of the carrot and stick has found a really good analogy, because it gets to the very heart of human behaviour.

If we were all donkeys we would be born healthy and cuddly. We would become beasts of burden and we'd be incentivised with carrots (although too many would make us obese) and punished with sticks (or even the threat of a beating). Our persecutors would be named and shamed by animal rights protestors, and put in prison because of the new law. After many years of working diligently for our masters, we would be old and disabled but with any luck we would be put out to grass and visited and appreciated by small children and country-lovers.

However, as human beings, we do not yet have the protection of the law. Domestic animals must now be treated with respect and their needs met.

The government has a wonderful opportunity to develop this policy and apply it to human beings in the workplace. We already have masses of evidence about the importance of dignity at work - the need to prevent stress and respect people's individuality whether they are old, young, black, white, disabled or just plain average.

The Dignity at Work Bill appears to have been abandoned in the glut of recent legislation.

But this Disability report has served as a timely reminder that some things are important and cannot be ignored.

If cruelty and disrespect are allowed to continue, the cost in human quality of life will be huge, as well as the cost in financial terms and the reputation of this country as a force for good in this twisted world.

The SEU Report and 'From Here to Equality' are worthy documents but the Strategy Unit now has its chance to make its mark and really make a difference to the lives of British citizens. Ten million people are relying on you so please accept the challenge and do something strategic.

If you decide to use some of these suggestions, I hope you will make the effort to contact me and also add an acknowledgement. Too often, members of the public contribute good ideas to government policy but they are rarely thanked or appreciated, or given the credit and respect they deserve.

Many thanks and best wishes

Grace Filby
Founder
Designs For Wellbeing