

Comments: Hello,

My apologies for the delay in sending feedback to you regarding this report. I had made the notes below beforehand and was waiting to discuss them with a colleague on Friday but was able to do so.

Currently I work as the p/t coordinator for a Disabled persons Organisation in Tower Hamlets, East London. We provide information, informal adaptive IT training and offer some employment support (ie job searching). In addition the organisation provides volunteer placements and at present 5 volunteers are engaged in working in the project, which provides all round training into work in this sort of project. In the other part of my week I am working on a phd focusing on the conceptual difficulties of disability. I am exploring how society represents disability and impairment as well as issues of personal identity that make people say things like 'I don't class myself as disabled - although I claim DLA'.

I was very interested to read the report and believe that it contains many good points. There are a couple of points that I would like to make which are listed below. These are not completely exhaustive and indeed with more time there are no doubt other issues to be made.

Identity – there are lots of difficulties with the concept of disability. People seem to go out of their way to avoid it as a label because of the negative connotations it holds. Without getting into a debate about 'normality' this issue is important to consider in terms of how services are advertised, offered and delivered. Although you recognise in the report this issue I believe that without serious thought and consideration there will remain significant trouble for services trying to deal with people who live with impairments. There needs to be I think better consideration within services as to how they are representing disability and should be doing so with a value judgement of acceptance rather than one that focuses on the inability as a negative, or as what cant be done. This is central to the strategy. As services for disabled people are managed on a large scale there can be numerous problems with trying to plan services for the 'similarities' of the group of disabled people. When there are so many issues of diversity. I think that disability services need to be careful of designing for 1 group when indeed all that brings them together is a word. Are there disabled people or are people who live with impairments?

Employment – In terms of work there are loads of challenges ahead. The typical model of work is based on the whole premise of ability. Straight away then there is a problem for people who have claimed benefits for disability, which has facilitated a culture where disability = inability to work. Also, current work culture is an abled bodied expression that requires outputs and production to complete tasks, Its usual form is full time in 5 chunks of 7 hours. How then can disabled people who cannot be 'able' in this way be engaged in employment. This I feel is something that really needs to be explored and

alternatives designed. With the advent of technology home working adaptive solutions the work space is now able to be redesigned to suit the person. This needs to be applied in a considerate and significant way for disabled people. However, there is also impairments that traditional adaptive technologies will not be able to facilitate employment alone. In this way I think about 'conscientious work collectives' that work with welfare benefit structures. These could help people contribute in some way to community/society and be supported in other life aspects some how. There also is the issue of how work culture allows its staff who acquire impairments to be retired. Perhaps greater legal vigilance could be applied to this situation. Employers should ensure they are responsible to their staff. There are 2 groups of disabled people when considering work. Those that are near to job readiness and those that have never worked but have spent lots of time in day centre / opportunity projects. For this group there are major barriers.

Finally, I would like to let you know that I and others from the DITO project are willing to be involved in future consultation and other events relating to this strategy. Indeed we are committed to 'improving the life chances of disabled people' and so would be happy to assist somehow in achieving this. We form part of a diverse network of disabled people in Tower Hamlets in the East End of London.

Many thanks

Stephen Lee Hodgkins

DITO - Disability Information Training Opportunity