



From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
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Dr Hywel Francis MP
Chair
Joint Committee on Human Rights
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA

Dear Hywel,

Thank you for your letter of 9th August, in which you asked about the compatibility of our policy towards Remploy with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The Government is committed to the UN Convention, and as the Committee will be aware from our response to the Committee's report on the right to independent living, we are working on a new disability strategy that is firmly based on the Convention's expectations. Our approach is one that aims to remove barriers and change the attitudes that prevent disabled people from achieving their ambitions, fulfilling their potential and actively participating in society. I believe that much has already been achieved but it is clear that further progress is needed. Through the discussions with disabled people around our approach – set out in our discussion document *Fulfilling Potential* - we have been developing a new strategy and will publish the next steps on that in the Autumn.

In relation to Article 27, I would accept that more can be done to ensure that disabled people are able to work on an equal basis with others. Employment rates remain almost 30 percentage points below those of non-disabled people. In order to make progress towards equality, we have decided to bring to an end subsidised segregated employment for disabled people and instead to target resources at promoting and supporting disabled people in meaningful mainstream jobs.

In relation to Article 19, the evidence indicates that exclusion from the labour market leads to exclusion from society at large. In her independent review published last year, Liz Sayce supported the view that Government-funded segregated employment is inconsistent with the objective of disability equality. Our programmes of employment support for disabled people, most notably Access to Work, are focused upon helping disabled people break down the barriers to getting a job, to live independently and to participate in their communities on an equal basis with non-

disabled people. In 2010/11, a fifth of the entire budget for specialist disability employment services went on supporting disabled people in Remploy factories – at a cost of £25,000 per year per factory worker. By contrast, the average Access to Work award to support a disabled person in mainstream employment is just £2,900. Therefore for the same amount spent on each disabled person working in a Remploy factory, the Access to Work programme can support up to 8 people to take up and retain a job in mainstream employment. We cannot continue to prop up an ineffective system, which for the majority of the disabled population does not offer the support they need. Targeting the available resources more effectively and, as a result, being able to support a wider group of disabled people is in our view entirely consistent with the Convention.

Furthermore, we are protecting the current £320 million budget for specialist disability employment services, with an extra £15 million (part of the £320 million protected budget) made available for Access to Work with the sole purpose of supporting more disabled people into work. Liz Sayce has said about our plans to implement her Access to Work recommendations that "they are widely supported by disabled people and our organisations – and it's especially important to improve opportunities for young disabled people who can bring big talents to our economy".

We believe that our policies are the best way we can support the standard of living for disabled people envisaged by Article 28, but insofar as additional protection is needed by those Remploy workers who face losing their jobs, we are doing everything we can to ensure will receive support and guidance to make the transition from Government-funded sheltered employment into mainstream employment. We have put in place an £8 million support package, guaranteeing tailored support for every single disabled person affected for up to 18 months, including a Personal Case Worker to help individuals with their future choices, as well as access to a personal budget for additional support. We are harnessing the knowledge and expertise of the Remploy Employment Service which in the last two years has successfully found jobs for 35,000 disabled and disadvantaged people, many with similar disabilities to those working in Remploy factories.

We are working with employers to offer targeted work opportunities for disabled people through "First Shot" including guaranteed interviews, job trials, work experience and training. We are setting up a Community Support Fund to provide grants to local voluntary sector and user-led organisations as well as working with local employers to offer targeted work opportunities for displaced staff.

In conclusion, our approach commands the widespread support of disabled people's organisations and disabled people themselves, many of whom have welcomed the move to end the pre-war practice of segregated employment. By spending Government funds more effectively, we can support thousands more disabled people in work. We are of the view that our approach is entirely in line with the Convention.

Kind regards,



Esther McVey MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Disabled People