**Minutes from APPG on Learning Disability Meeting on *Accessible Apprenticeships 1/02/2022***

**Chair**: Mark Harper MP

**Panel Speakers:**

* Hannah Nicholls-Harrison, Policy Officer, Mencap
* Connor Daniels, Apprentice
* Chris Quickfall, Cognassist
* Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships the Rt Hon Alex Burghartd MP

**APPG Officers in attendance**

* Baroness Hollins

**Approximately 64 people in total attended the meeting.**

**Speaker’s contributions**

**Hannah Nicholls-Harrison**

Hannah shared the updates on the new Mencap report ‘[Accessible Apprenticesips](https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Mencap%20Accessible%20Apprenticeships_0.pdf)’, a report that followed up from the APPG’s previous report. Surveyed employers and training providers about regulatory issues people with a learning disability and learning difficulty face accessing and completing apprenticeships.

**Connor Daniels**

Talked about his experiences of apprenticeships, getting reasonable adjustments for his learning difficulty, and how he has managed to find apprenticeship support that was tailored to his needs.

**Chris Quickfall:**

Endorsed the findings of the Mencap’s report. Explained the function of cognitive assessments in identifying learning disabilities and learning difficulties, and that the sector has the knowledge and resources to implement these recommendations.

**Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships:**

The Minister spoke about how apprenticeships is one of his key priority areas.

Looking at apprenticeships is something he has been interested in before being a minister. He wants to use the apprenticeship program to get people in jobs they deserve and so that their talents are recognised, and employers can see that people with learning disabilities have a great deal to offer.

The Minister would like to hear from members of the APPG to feed into his work.

**Question and Answers:**

1. **Ray Booth:** What local arrangements are needed to make sure people can move on from apprenticeships to paid jobs? If people are on apprenticeships and it doesn’t lead to a job- what can we be done so people don’t lose out on that experience?

Minister: hopefully that experience and knowledge would aid people in interviews and applications. Minister remembers from being on the Work and Pensions Committee previously, that if there were reasonable adjustments needed, you had to apply for the job first, and then you would see if you’d get them, now told at job interviews about reasonable adjustments available.

Connor: People are often given support by provider not employer. External provider and the company itself in training needs to offer support.

1. **Lucy Beattie:** How can we ensure that the apprenticeship application process is accessible and fair to people with learning disabilities when competing against people without learning disabilities? Employers aren’t aware of how they can be varied/adaptations that can be made?

Minister: We have something to learn from the disabled network apprenticeship and diversity champions network. Minister’s Office has 2 reports on their experiences in apprenticeships coming out next week.

Hannah: Employers and providers are willing to support learners with flexibilities in an apprenticeship. The hindrance is with the legislation. There needs to be regulatory change- there is one clause that would open apprenticeships to thousands of people with a learning disability, enabling them to access training and a pathway to employment.

Chris Quickfall: There are a lot of disincentives in supporting neurodivergent people, some have been removed by DFE, but some haven’t. You get people trained and qualified, but they don’t recieve the qualification because they fail an element of the apprenticeship unrelated to the role. Eligibility for flexibilities is not available: Statement of Special Educational Needs no longer exist, Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) no longer exist. The only way to qualify for flexibilities is education health and care plans. You have 8 weeks to get an EHCP done, but they take 13-20 weeks. So it’s impossible if it’s not pre-existing, and it’s only available to people under 25-year olds.

Minister: If you were to re-draft this- how would it look?

Hannah: Another pathway to qualify for the flexibility should be opened: using a standardised cognitive assessment to evidence an LDD. This recommendation can be found in the Mencap Report - Clause 42 of Apprenticeship Standards for England needs amended.

1. **Rohan Lowe:** What are the Govt’s plans to increase young people into supported internships?

Minister: They did a trial which resulted in paid employment, 10 years ago, since then providers improved considerably.

Minister wanted some examples; Rohan gave his experience doing a supported internship and his friends.

1. **Lynne:** Maths and English requirement will it be changed, role relevant? The flexibilities to access are still only at a level 2 apprenticeship, it doesn’t meet everyone’s needs.

Minister: we’ve been looking at English and maths very broadly, secretary of state relaxed the level on T levels a few months ago concerned college weren’t accepting people. Started a bigger convo, whether hard English and maths requirements on courses and offers work. Minister will feed into discussions on this into talks in the department.

Hannah: One of our recommendations in the report is that the DfE re-examine the English and maths requirements for people with an LDD. If there are no industry-specific minimum requirements, the English and maths for people with a learning disability with an should be focused on the practical skills required for the specific job roles. 95% of employers, training providers and stakeholders support this recommendation.

1. Emma Chamberland: How do we improve the perception of what a person with SEN can do among employers and providers?

Chris: Share case studies is the most impactful way for people to know what people can do.

Hannah: Mencap wrote a report “Good for Business” that makes the business case why employing people with a learning disability. For example, people with a learning disability have lower turnover, stay in a role on average 3.5x longer than non-disabled people.

Minister: This meeting has drawn attention to something that’s problematic and he wasn’t aware of, so will take up some of the issues raised and see what he can do.

Actions:

* Minister keen to look at legislation that acts as a barrier to opening up apprenticeships for thousands of people, based on the issues raised by Hannah and Chris
* Minister would like the APPG to feed into work on apprenticeships.
* We would like Edel to meet with the Minister.
* Jameela to email Matt Foulds some of the points raised in the chat.