

more than words
mwy na geiriau

2 2008

The Journal of Disability Wales/Cylchgrawn Anabledd Cymru/£3



Work

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Joining Disability Wales gives you unique opportunity to network with other disabled people, disability organisations and allies right across Wales.

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How to join

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Email us info@disabilitywales.org or

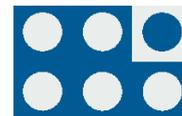
Write or call us at

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editorial

Chris Tally Evans

Employment is a complex and emotive issue. Anyone who looks back to the miners' strike in 1984, must agree that the dignity of employment can be central to our sense of community and self respect. Work gives us status, a path to travel and goals to achieve.

However, it can also be a ruthless tool in furthering inequality, separating the haves from the have nots, and reinforcing the barriers that prevent so many minority groups from achieving their rightful place in society.

Despite the many initiatives to redress this situation discussed in this issue by Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones and Minister for Disabled People Ann McGuire, disabled people are far more likely to be unemployed than our non disabled counterparts. Why should this be? DW's own Graham Findlay and Breakthrough UK's Lorraine Gradwell hit us with some of the harsh realities behind the trumpet blowing and examine the 'gaps' in current thinking. In the calm eye of this stormy debate it a pleasure to be able to celebrate



the huge success of Enter in our Retrospective on the Road to Success. Client advice, networking, training, mainstreaming, consultancy and self development for entrepreneurs through Enrich were all vital ingredients in the winning Enter recipe (and I'm proud to include myself as one of the cooks!) Everyone agrees that there is still a lot more work to be done but at the same time DW and all the Enter team should be justly proud of the difference they have made for so many people over the past six years.

While we're on the subject of DW helping self employed people I'd just like to thank Rhian, Penni and everyone else at DW for thinking of me when they needed a guest editor. I've enjoyed it tremendously.

One of the reasons that self employment continues to be the preferred option for so many disabled people seems to be that the emphasis still focuses on the individual and their impairments rather than on changing the whole nature of our approach to work. The inclusion of women over the past two decades has transformed the workplace,

"We asked Peter Hain to write something but he had other things on his mind"

bringing greater flexibility, understanding and common sense. We now need to campaign vocally for these changes to further remove the many barriers that prevent disabled people from working.

But we should be wary. With the demise of the British Council of Disabled People, large charities such as Scope and Leonard Cheshire are putting themselves forward as 'experts' on disability equality and organisations like Remploy are keen to shed their segregationalist image and modernise.

While we mustn't shoot the leopard for wanting to change its spots the motives of such rich and powerful organisations should be treated with caution, at least until they become controlled by a majority of disabled people.

With the advent of the single equalities commission and possible future watering down of the disability equality duties, disabled people must continue to fight for the basic right to set out our own agenda and regain control of our lives.

**Disability
Wales
On-line**

www.disabilitywales.org



**Cover picture: Abstract 1.1
by Cheyenne Mahoney**

Cheyenne Mahoney is an artist and curator born and based in Cardiff, Wales. She is a self-taught painter with formal training in Art History and Design. This has greatly influenced her style and provides a strong structural basis for her ideas.

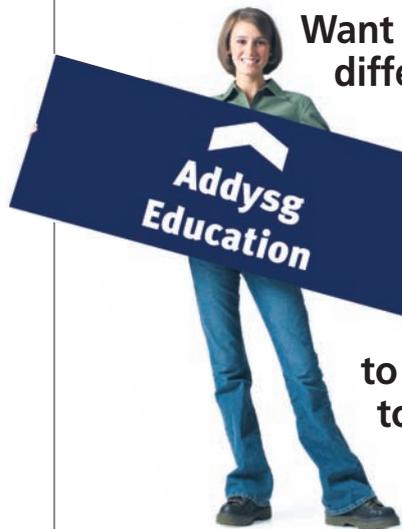
Cheyenne's paintings are not solely restricted to canvas. Past artworks, whether figurative, semi-figurative or fully abstract have been conceived on interior and exterior surfaces, slate, wood, ceramic, fabric, card and plastic. She also allows images of her work to be used by academic publishers and disability awareness organisations.

Her current series of full abstracts are inspired by Cubist collage, Constructivism and themes presented by artists such as Piet Mondrian and Ben Nicholson. These take the form of enigmatic geometric studies into the intense formal tension of shallow space, where the expressing principles of restraint, balance and order are found.

Abstract 1.1 is part of this series of abstracts which were previously exhibited at The Gallery, Newport, where they were viewed by HRH the Prince of Wales.

To view existing artworks, commission new pieces or to leave comments, please visit her website at www.cheyennemahoney.co.uk.

Help shape your commu



Want to make a difference to the services that affect you and your community? You don't always need to be a specialist to get involved...

For many people the idea of taking up a public appointment post can seem daunting. There are meetings to attend, important decisions to be made, background papers to read, and yet most public appointments posts are filled on a voluntary basis.

Contrary to popular belief, these roles are not the preserve of high-powered businessmen. There are currently more than 1000 volunteer public appointees across the country from all backgrounds and walks of life. These volunteers give up their time and share their personal and professional experiences to shape our public services. By becoming part of the process, appointees influence decisions that affect each and every one of us.

Public appointees form part of a committee, known as a board. These cover all kinds of areas including sports, arts, culture, education, health services, environment and tourism. The work they carry out varies immensely, for example providing suitable transport for the elderly, the future of the arts in Wales and local recreational services.

This work is vital to the everyday running of our local communities and the country as a whole.

We caught up with four appointees who sit on their local Community Health Council. Here they tell us what it is like to be a public appointee, what they get out of their role and how their disability has been no barrier to getting their voice heard.

After being diagnosed with MS Elizabeth Griffiths decided to put something back into her local health authority, so she applied for the Pembrokeshire Community Health Council. Elizabeth filled in the application form and successfully completed the panel interview. Since then she has never looked back and has found out that her disability is no



barrier to her public duties. "The other board members are very considerate when it comes to my disability, and they have been really flexible when it comes to scheduling meetings," she said. "People in the local community now contact me for advice on the NHS locally, and it's a great feeling to know people seek and value your advice."

When Judith Smallwood was diagnosed with chronic heart and pulmonary disease, she refused to let her deteriorating health ruin her life and became a member of the Caerphilly Community Health Council. "When you have been out of the work place for a while, it is gratifying to gain back the confidence lost," says Judith. "It's a busy role, yet I

nity

do only what I can, tailoring the work to suit me. I don't feel pressured into doing what I can't manage." Public appointees do not always need experience in the subject area of the post they are applying for, and a healthy interest is often as much of an advantage as a long career. "Having been in a position to need the NHS, I feel I bring my own experiences of health care to this role. I enjoy the fact that I can influence policies, monitor them and be a voice for other ordinary people."



Semi-retired transport consultant Brian Bigwood, from Caernarfon, has not allowed his visual impairment to stand in his way of making a difference to his local Community Health Council. "I feel I have a lot to offer this role. I am aware of local issues, and because I am visually impaired, I have experience of the health service from a different perspective," said Brian. Brian urges anyone else who's interested in making a difference to volunteer the required three or four days per month. "While I think anyone should give it a go, if



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

you are painfully shy it could be an uncomfortable position to be in. But I enjoy getting to know people from the panels, and from an egocentric point of view, I hope the work I do makes a difference."

Mary Bollingham from Barry has lived with dyslexia all her life, but it hasn't stopped her taking on membership of the Vale of Glamorgan Community Health Council. "Once I was accepted onto the board, I received the training I needed to



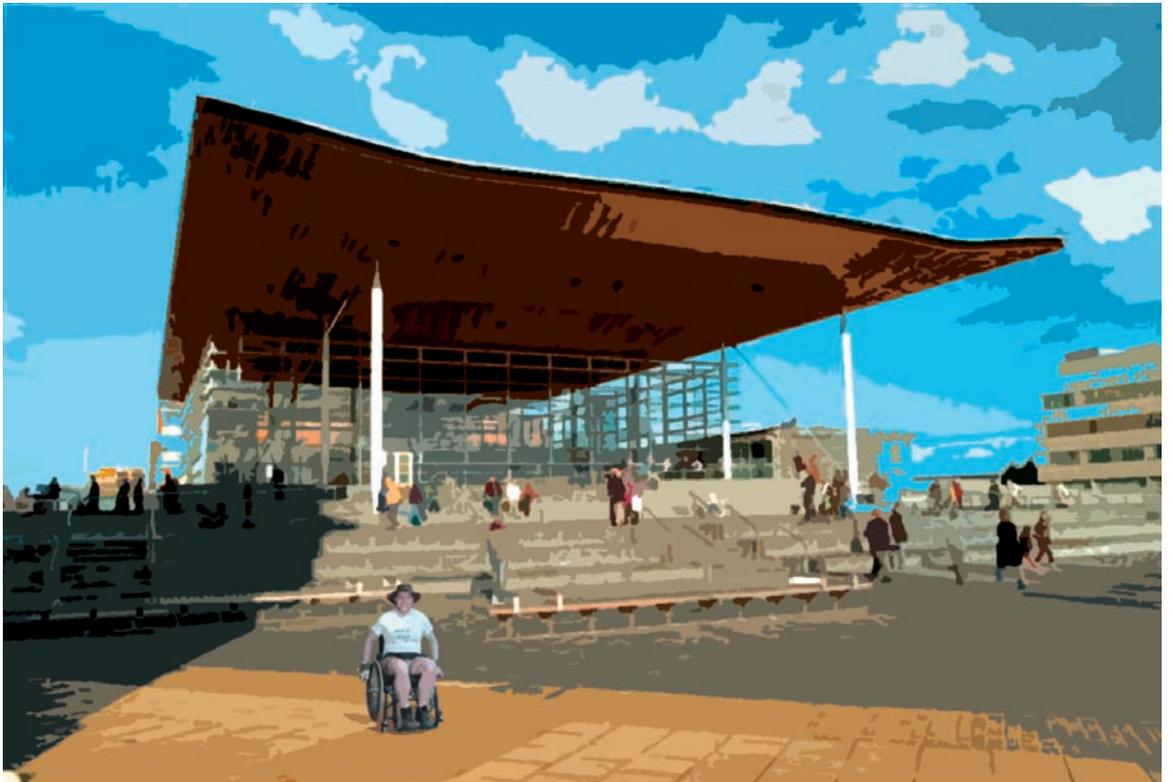
do the work." says Mary, who with the support of her husband Alan, tackles report writing as part of her appointment. Mary urges anyone who wants to take up a similar challenge to do it too. "I'm such a changed person after joining the board and I honestly feel that we make a difference. We carry out Hospital Patients Environments inspections, and we can do spot checks on hospitals when complaints about cleanliness come in," she said, "We are the people they can come to, and it does feel good, knowing that you can be directly responsible for making someone's life that little bit more comfortable when they're in the strange environs of a hospital."

Public appointments are often advertised in the media across Wales. Current vacancies can always be viewed on www.wales.gov.uk/publicappointments. Applications are welcome from anyone.

Valuing the role of disabled people



Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport, Ieuan Wyn Jones, explains the Assembly's commitment to the disabled people of Wales.



Disabled people have a crucial role to play in securing the future of 21st Century Wales.

Devolution of power from London – just eight years old – is evolving rapidly, and this welcome change is mirrored by a new sense of confidence in our cultural and economic life.

We aim to see Wales taking its place as a prosperous, inclusive European nation – and success in achieving these ambitions for our country requires the active participation of those who may previously not have been economically active.

Quite simply, it is vital to ensure the greatest possible involvement of all our people.

Disabled people are more than three times as likely to be out of work as the population as a whole – and no country

can hope to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy if large numbers of people are prevented from fully taking part.

Wales, with its radical tradition of ‘chwarae teg’ or fair play, is especially committed to supporting disabled people in taking up paid employment and running their own businesses.

Our nation has pioneered the concepts of old-age pensions, a free health service and a comprehensive system of national insurance. That commitment is reflected in the Welsh Assembly Government’s ‘One Wales’ programme for the next four years.

Social inclusion is a crucial part of our vision and one of our government’s cross-cutting themes – an element we expect to see embodied in all the endeavours of the public sectors and all our partners and contractors.

We are pledged to work for a country where everyone achieves their full potential. Real equality for all means strong support for those who may have been marginalised from society, including disabled people.

Once again, devolution means that Wales can exert greater influence over our economic and social life, enabling us to devise Welsh solutions for Welsh problems.

An Equality Support Unit has been established within my Department for the Economy and Transport. Its goal is to

“disabled people play a valuable role in helping our country forge ahead”

make sure that in designing any policy and service delivery initiative, the needs of under-represented groups, including disabled people, are taken into account at the very outset.

Our Enterprise Team also supports the work of mainstreaming services in providing additional advice for individuals from underrepresented groups to help them start up in business. One of its particular objectives is to help businesses develop policies that target recruitment towards all those facing barriers to employment.

We have inherited a number of initiatives to break down barriers and actively support disabled people's participation in the world of work.

For example, the Assembly Government's Framework for Supported Employment, developed by a range of organisations working with employers and disabled people, helped ensure that the assistance available is used to the best effect.

We have worked with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus and Remploy, as well as undertaking intensive research into how we can further help disabled people and other groups who are at a disadvantage in the labour market.

The Assembly Government has also supported a number of projects which the Royal National Institute for the Blind operates under its employment strategy for blind and partially sighted people.

“Wales with its radical tradition of 'chwarae teg' or fair play is especially committed to supporting disabled people”

We have also assisted disabled people to start up and run their own businesses through a range of measures that promote enterprise, including the Potentia programme, which channelled support to a number of key partners who have delivered the enterprise agenda throughout Wales.

There has also been extensive work with small and medium sized business owners through the SME Equality Project, enabling this large group of employers to understand the benefits of employing a diverse workforce.

Now we have arrived at a new phase in our work of enterprise support – one in which mainstream providers themselves take up the responsibility of delivering the Assembly Government's ambitions for full participation

I want business support to become more accessible, providing practical support for

under-represented groups to a greater extent than in the past. We will ensure that business support and advice provided by publicly funded services includes information on Disability Discrimination legislation.

A key element in this is the Business Eye service, which is the principal access portal to business support and information for new and established businesses in Wales. Business Eye is committed to delivering an accessible service, a commitment matched by the training of its staff and the range of disability related information provided on the website.

One important way in which we can help disabled people into work is by improving public transport.

Effective transport helps people access both jobs and the services they need to equip themselves for work, as well as health, leisure and social facilities. Improving transport is therefore an important way of delivering economic, social and environmental objectives and enhancing quality of life.

Thanks to our use of devolved powers, elderly and disabled people are able to travel free on local bus services throughout Wales and a short distance into and from England.

The scheme is fully funded by the Welsh Assembly Government – and more than 531,000 free passes have been issued by one of the 22 local authorities in Wales,

and the scheme has helped turn around what had been a long-term decline in bus travel.

The success of the scheme has encouraged us to put more funds into community transport. Three million pounds over three years will provide limited free travel on community transport for severely disabled people.

Now we look ahead

The Want 2 Work Pilot joint initiative between the Assembly Government and Job Centre Plus is helping disabled people back into work.

This initiative has a strong role to play in tackling economic inactivity in Wales – participants will, on moving into work, receive financial support to help their transition from benefits to paid employment.

It is supported by the European Social Fund and provides a comprehensive return to work package.

Here in Wales disabled people play a valuable role in helping our country forge ahead.

Our ancient land has come a long way in a short time. Today, with more control over our country's life than ever, we aim to enhance that role still further.

Pathways



Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, tells us about the government's plans to help disabled people seeking employment.

Back in 1995, when the Personal Capability Assessment for potential Incapacity Benefit claimants was first introduced, musculoskeletal disorders accounted for 40% of all claims. It was a time when hardly anyone had an email address and when many employers were still turning away job applicants simply because they had a disability – something that is now illegal.

Over the past decade, new technology has completely revolutionised our workplaces and, in the process, opened up a whole new range of possibilities for disabled jobseekers. And now it is mental health conditions that account for 40% of all incapacity benefit claims.

Consequently, we recognised that an assessment that may have been fit for purpose in 1995 is inappropriate for today. That's why from 2008, we are replacing the old test with the new Work Capability Assessment (WCA). We're also replacing IB with the new Employment and Support Allowance.

The new assessment has been carefully designed to put the emphasis on what an individual can do, rather than on what they can't, and to look at what help they

might need to get into work.

It will also assess abilities that are more relevant to today's modern workplace, to give a much more accurate picture of what each individual would be capable of doing, if they were in work.

For example, under the old PCA people were tested to see if they could sit for more than one hour without needing to get up and move around. By contrast, the new assessment will be looking to see how easily individuals can use a computer keyboard or a mouse – which is much more likely to be a factor in them successfully getting or keeping a job.

The way we assess mental health has been completely revised to make it a fairer and more relevant test that includes people who have conditions such as learning disabilities.

It's no secret that the vast majority of people who can work would be far better off doing so. That's why we are committed to helping long-term benefit claimants go back to work.

The new assessment will be more robust in identifying those who have a limited ability to work and those who can work,

“we recognise that an assessment that may have been fit for purpose in 1995 is inappropriate for today”

which means around 20,000 fewer people a year will go on to benefits. At the same time, anyone who qualifies for the new Employment and Support Allowance will benefit from more help and more support than ever before.

For most people, where a return to work is feasible, they will receive the Employment Support component of ESA and will be required to undergo work-related activity, such as drawing up an action plan.

Those with the most serious disabilities and health conditions would receive the Support component of ESA, which is worth more. They would not need to undergo work-related activity, though they could volunteer to take part if they wished to.

But the real place to start is before a person ever gets on to incapacity benefits in the first place.

We know that most people want to work and that being in work is good for your health and wellbeing, so we want to stop people falling out of work because they have a disability.

That is why we are working with healthcare professionals and employers to provide them with the support they need to help keep people in work even when they develop a disabling condition or, if they need to be off work for a time, ensure they return to work as soon as possible.

The Pathways to Work programme is specifically designed to help people with mental health conditions come off incapacity benefit and find work. The aim is to roll out Pathways across the country by 2008 in advance of ESA.

The programme includes help from highly skilled Jobcentre Plus personal advisers, condition management programmes, a Return to Work Credit of £40 a week and in-work support.

We've also launched a consultation on the specialist employment services we provide for disabled people who have complex issues when it comes to finding, retaining and progressing in work.

Wherever possible, we want to help disabled people and non-disabled people work together, instead of segregating disabled people according to their disability or type of impairment.

We also want to give disabled people a more seamless service, which will take them from education, learning and training all the way into mainstream work.

Every day, there are 600,000 job vacancies advertised in the UK - by focusing on what disabled people and those with mental health conditions can do, we hope to make it easier for them to move into work and access the same opportunities as everyone else.

Contact for further information

Anita Silk
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Direct line: 020 3267 5127

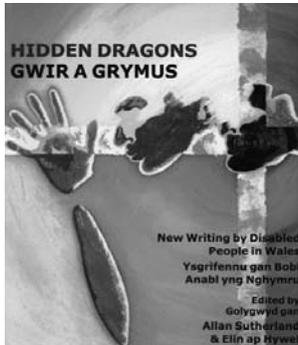
- To view Transformation of the Personal Capability Assessment visit:

www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/pca.asp

- To view and take part in the Improving Specialist Disability Services public consultation visit:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/des-consultation.asp>

Disability Arts Cymru



Some of the poetry in this edition is from Disability Arts Cymru's *Hidden Dragons*, a collection of writing by disabled people living in Wales. If you have writing, short stories or poetry, that you would like to submit for the summer issue, please contact Disability Wales. Short stories should be no longer than 700 words.

Disability Arts Cymru believes that Disabled & Deaf People have an exciting and valuable contribution to make to the arts in Wales. They are committed to working with individuals and organisations to celebrate the diversity of Disabled & Deaf People's arts and culture, and develop equality across all art forms.

Hidden Dragons:

New Writing by Disabled People in Wales, edited by Allan Sutherland and Elin ap Hywel.

Funny, sad, passionate, tender, sarcastic, intimate, angry, nostalgic, a great variety of writers; each with their own writing style, their own experience of life, and their own idiosyncratic outlook. All of them are doing the writer's job of telling the truth as they see it.

"...fantastic - such a wealth of competent, articulate disabled voices, and some of it even in Welsh! For anyone who enjoys good writing and poetry especially, I urge you to get a copy."

MAT FRASER, WRITER, PERFORMER, MUSICIAN

This groundbreaking book - the first of its kind in Wales - has given the opportunity for the voices of disabled people in Wales to be heard through their writing.

Hidden Dragons is available from bookshops for £7.99. ISBN 1-902638-39-5.

It is also available in large print, Braille, on audio tape, and on CD-Rom from Disability Arts Cymru. Get in touch with us to find out more.

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Can Work? Want to Work?

A personal view by DW's Graham Findlay which looks at some of the gaps in the employment sector that affect disabled people.

Better watch out for **The Gap**



Employment and disabled people in the UK - what's the current situation?

Let's start off with some facts:

- Of the total number of people of working age out of work in Britain, 40 per cent are disabled.
- Only 51 per cent of disabled people are in work, falling to 21 per cent of people with a mental health condition and 17 per cent of people with a learning disability.
- Almost a third of working-age disabled adults live in income poverty.
- For disabled people with a higher education qualification, the 'lacking but wanting work' rate of 14 per cent is actually higher than the 'lacking but wanting work' rate of non-disabled people with no qualifications at all.
- At any given level of qualification, a disabled person is more likely than a non-disabled person to be low-paid.

(Source: Changing Britain for Good, Disability Rights Commission)

Research from the Disability Rights Commission several years ago – before the Welfare Reform Bill – demonstrated that disabled people are at a disadvantage before even entering the labour market. At the age of 16 disabled people are twice as likely not to be in education, training or employment.

Statistics also reveal that Wales has the

highest proportion of young people leaving school without qualifications regardless of disability. How can we tackle these barriers and improve equality of access to work for disabled people?

Plugging the gaps

Despite the advent of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part 2, this research suggests that there are still significant gaps to plug in the area of employment. Let's focus on some key gaps that have been identified by the DRC.

Gap 1.

The perspective of non-disabled employees of what might happen to their jobs if they develop a long term health condition is at odds with the willingness of employers to be supportive.

Becoming a disabled person – or acquiring a long term health condition – cuts across many facets of our lives. At the personal level, this often means re-evaluating our identities and the expectations we have of ourselves, our family, our friends and of course our employers. For many newly disabled people this re-evaluation tends to be a negative experience. Given the cultural dominance of the Medical Model of Disability, with its emphasis on cure, treatment and control of impaired individuals to fit in with society, this is not surprising. In my experience, the key perspective from people who have developed a long term health condition is

fear and anxiety about losing their job or being down-graded to menial work.

However, it is surprising to see from the research that a cultural shift appears to be taking place with regards to employers views of disabled people as employees – that they have become supportive rather than not. Anecdotal evidence has pointed to a justifiable concern that employees who become disabled people are still discriminated against in the workplace, rather than being supported by willing employers. Is this another under-reported issue, or has huge progress been made in this area which contradicts our shared experiences?

It may be that people who acquire impairment whilst in work are perceived and treated differently from disabled people “out there” in the general labour pool, those 49% who are not in work. Or are disabled people in fact not being assertive enough in demanding their rights under the DDA Part 2 provisions? Given that over 50% of disabled people do not consider themselves “disabled” under the DDA, this may indeed be the case.

A timely reminder – Part 2 of the DDA gives disabled people protection from discrimination in employment, including:

- direct discrimination in the workplace
- failure to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- disability-related less favourable treatment.

- subjecting a disabled person to harassment
- victimisation of a disabled person (or a non-disabled person who is supporting a disabled person).

Gap 2.

Employer attitudes remain patchy – for example a leadership failure often results in differing approaches from line managers within the same organisation. (The use of) overly-prescriptive rules on absence management fail to distinguish disability related absence (from illness).

“I work as a teacher, teaching primary school children. I work full time from my wheelchair, and believe I teach as well as, if not better than, before I was disabled. The parents have been pleased with my work, I love teaching, the children learn well... but can I get a full time permanent job? I wish!

Head teachers are frightened of employing someone who might let them down, be absent more than anyone else or not do a good job. I am, therefore, prevented from making a valuable and continued contribution to society.”

(Source: Changing Britain for Good, DRC)

This finding seems to contradict the first which relates to willing and supportive employers! Not distinguishing between disability-related absence and general

“despite the DDA, we are still not even halfway there when it comes to the employment of disabled people. We all need to do a lot more”

illness can create major barriers for disabled employees. Positive and consistent attitudes and an understanding of disability equality are vital components of any management strategy affecting disabled staff members. Prior to the legal provisions of the DDA, disabled people had to prove to themselves and their employers that they could be relied upon and were worthy of employment. This perspective tended to use the discourse of denial, along the lines that “I don’t see myself as being disabled”. Maxims such as “disabled people are worth employing because they have to prove themselves by working twice as hard as non-disabled employees” colluded with the notion of the Supercrip who could take on and overcome any amount of work that was thrown at them. A modern, wealthy society like Wales should be able to offer a wide spectrum of working patterns, and accommodating the diversity of our impairments should underpin this approach.

A key intervention that promotes positive attitudes amongst employers to disabled people is disability equality training (DET) in groups. There appear to be two current challenges to DET – one is the rise of internet based training packages, that are often promoted as cost effective, particularly for larger organisations, in terms of staff time taken to complete them, and consistency. The second is the rise of generic diversity training, which covers the range of equality areas in one session, again seen as cost effective. The key outcome as far as disabled people are concerned is whether these models of training actually change the attitudes of managers, or address leadership failures around disability equality – the jury is still out on internet-based training and diversity training in this respect. DET has at least been proven to be relatively effective in changing attitudes. For more information on DET, see the Disability Wales website.

Gap 3.

Barriers still exist within the benefits system preventing work-take up – for example, taking up a work opportunity may trigger a review of the non-work related Disability Living Allowance. Those needing to move may have to renegotiate a care package with a different local authority.

The complexities of the benefits system in relation to disabled people are well-



“I work as a teacher, teaching primary school children... full-time from my wheelchair... but can I get a full-time permanent job? I wish!”

known and documented. While Government calls for a flexible workforce and pushes forward a Widening Access agenda in higher education, the necessary support systems for disabled people do not seem to be consistent across the country. The rise of “portfolio” working, which calls for a great deal of flexibility on the part of employees, needs a corresponding flexibility in terms of enabling disabled people to engage in this kind of work pattern.

On the credit side, the Government is making a public committent to individual budgets – which will in theory allow disabled people far greater autonomy in what kind of care/assistance packages they

purchase, and should help to remove some barriers to flexible employment. A similar approach needs to be imposed onto areas of the disability benefits system, which can be described as generally inflexible and unduly prescriptive.

Summing up...

Since the advent of the DDA, clear legal duties have been laid down that should prevent disability discrimination in employment. However, evidence shows that discrimination must be still happening, and on a systematic and institutionalised scale. For example, why are a massive 83% of people with a learning difficulty unemployed? This shameful statistic cannot surely be explained away by reference to employer attitudes alone.

One thing is clear – despite the DDA, we are still not even halfway there when it comes to the employment of disabled people. We all need to do a lot more.

● be PREPARED !

Major changes will occur within the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) from November 2008.

For months the media has reported on changes to our benefit system coming later this year.

- **The Government plans to introduce Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to replace Incapacity Benefit and income support (paid on the basis of incapacity) from November 2008.**
- **All new ESA claimants (with some exemptions) will enter an assessment phase lasting no more than 12 weeks, (this includes the reformed PCA.)**
- **ESA will focus on capability for work rather than benefit entitlement or incapacity.**

Existing claimants:

- **If you are already receiving Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Income Support (IS) when ESA is introduced, you will continue to receive those benefits.**

Disability Wales/Anabledd Cymru are preparing a new informative bullet point fact sheet on Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

If you want a copy please contact:

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Van Road, Caerphilly CF83 3GW
Tel: 029 2088 7325
Fax: 029 2088 8702
E-mail: info@disabilitywales.org



Lorraine Gradwell,
Chief Executive of
Breakthrough UK Ltd,
looks behind the
policies to examine the
harsh realities that still
face disabled people
who want to work.

Why are we still **not** working?

In the 21st century, unemployment is still a major issue for disabled people, and therefore for the government; the cost of the Incapacity Benefit payments has more than trebled since 1997 and the government are promoting employment as the route out of poverty for disabled people. Although the employment rate of disabled people has risen from 44.1% in 2002 to 47.2% in 2007, despite a raft of government programmes and initiatives, there is still a huge gap between the employment rate for disabled people and that for non-disabled people, which remains relatively constant at about 79%. And among people with learning disabilities, those with mental health issues, and deaf people, paid employment remains a remote pipe dream for the majority.

But why should this be? Since the New

Labour government swept into power in 1997, promising 'work for those who can, support for those who cannot' the number of disabled people in employment has risen by an average of just 3%. What is it about these feckless disabled people that they can't get or hold down a job? Perhaps we should look closely, not just at the shifting sands of employment policy and programmes, but also at the wider world of disability policy.

The last ten years have seen tremendous changes in the world of disability; the Disability Rights Commission has been and gone, and we now have the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which may yet be too new to judge; the excellent 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' report from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit has led to many initiatives, including the establishment of the Office

for Disability Issues (ODI). It also led to the setting up of 'Equality 2025' which is intended to be a channel for the views of disabled people to government – not exactly the national organisation for organisations of disabled people that the report originally recommended. The British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) set up by disabled people in 1981 to be the accountable and representative voice of organisations of disabled people is no more, although it is transformed into the United Kingdom Disabled People's Council (UKDPC), and is working in partnership with SCOPE – a move which has surprised many long term disability activists. Many Centres for Independent Living (CILs) have disappeared through either a lack of funding or unfair competition from the big charities, but a Department of Health project which aims to establish a 'User-Led

“this new lack at the national level creates a ‘gap in the market’ for the large charities to exploit and put themselves forward as the experienced and authoritative voice on disability”

Organisation’ in every local authority area by 2010 is well underway and the concept of the ‘service user’ is now well understood by local authorities.

In terms of employment, the government’s big idea is ‘Pathways to Work’, refined from the New Deal programmes and developed with a ‘Condition Management’ element, a very medically-focussed approach designed to help people ‘manage’ their illness or impairment. This brings a major focus on rehabilitation and occupational health, with the developing interests of the large insurance companies who have clearly foreseen the potential for a wider market for their services.

Meanwhile, Remploy has been instructed by the government to ‘modernise’. The political turmoil caused by the proposal to close the majority of the Remploy factories, and the opposition from people and organisations who should know better, has revealed the depth of protective and dependency-creating attitudes that still exist towards disabled people.

Imminent changes to the benefits system are coming with the Employment Support Allowance, which includes two levels of benefit depending on your capacity for work (the return of the ‘deserving poor’ concept?) and which also includes a quicker and more stringent ‘Personal Capability Assessment’, on the basis that



Lorraine Gradwell, Breakthrough UK with Minister for Disabled People, Anne McGuire

the sooner the assessment happens the more chance there is of getting someone back to work.

There has also been a lot of activity on the anti-discrimination / diversity / human rights front. As mentioned above, the DRC no longer exists but has been in part replaced by the new single Commission; many people in the field are concerned that the vast majority of knowledge and experience on disability that was built up has not transferred to the new Commission, and will be lost. Some have expressed concern that this new lack at the national level creates a 'gap in the market' for the large charities to exploit and put themselves forward as the experienced and authoritative voice on disability. Indeed,

Leonard Cheshire is already writing to the Chief Executives of local authorities, offering to work with them on a range of issues.

The Discrimination Law Review was aimed at simplifying current legislation, making it easier to understand and more effective at tackling disadvantage. Again, many were concerned at some of the government's proposals in the consultation paper 'A Framework for Fairness' last summer, feeling that clarity and strength around disability matters was in danger of being lost.

On the Independent Living front, the ODI has undertaken a cross-government review on Independent Living. It has found evidence that traditional approaches to

support for disabled people have failed to reduce the significant inequalities experienced by them and their families. The development of user-led organisations is being supported by the DoH, and Ministers have expressed clear support for the expansion of Individual Budgets. The funding of 'social care' is poised at a crisis point, with many local authorities funding support only to those people deemed to have substantial or critical needs, with some moving to critical only. Meanwhile, the government has signed up to the first international human rights treaty of the 21st century – the United Nations (UN) Convention on Disability Rights, which covers areas such as the right to life, to personal mobility, to health, to education, and to work and employment. Which brings us back to the matter at hand – the seemingly intractable unemployment rates of disabled people.

“22% of individuals 'in households affected by disability' are at risk of living in income poverty compared to 16% of households where no one is disabled”

The disabled people's movement originated the Seven Needs for Independent Living; significantly they did not include employment, the logic being that if the needs for independence were met then disabled people could compete for jobs on a level playing field with non-disabled people. We don't yet know if this is true, because it has never really been tested. Government employment programmes have paid scant attention to the analyses of the disabled people's movement, which have focussed on the societal barriers to inclusion and independence. Rather they have focussed almost entirely on the individual, on making them more 'employable'. Only recently is the DWP looking more seriously at the impact that the actions of employers have on the unemployment of disabled people.

Of course, the DDA 1995, and subsequent extensions, has in principle addressed the issue of discrimination at work, and - along with the Special Educational Needs and Education Act (SENDA) – in education. But the extent to which DWP and the DRC worked closely on developing programmes which not only developed the career prospects of disabled people, but also took account of the persistent and often open discrimination that disabled people face, is not at all clear.

However, if access to the built environment, to the transport

infrastructure, to accessible and appropriate information, to suitable housing and technical aids, to personal assistance and to peer support were available, why then it seems reasonable to suspect that disabled people would operate on more of a level playing field from which to judge the true nature of their 'unemployability'.

As it stands, disabled people's access to education and training remains poor; opportunities to move house with your career can be prohibitively expensive; transporting your 'care package' to a new local authority area is usually an administrative nightmare and a real threat to the assessed levels of support provided; negotiating an Access to Work package of support can take months, and can last longer than your probationary period.

For example; in 2003/04 only 37% of disabled 16 year olds achieved 5 A*-C grade GCSE's, compared to 53% of non-disabled 16 year olds whilst 28% of disabled 19 year olds had experience of

"... negotiating an Access to Work package can take months"

higher education compared to 41% of non-disabled 19 year olds. Similarly, data from 2005/06 states that 22% of individuals 'in households affected by disability' are at risk of living in income poverty compared to 16% of households where no one is disabled.

DWP are currently consulting on a Review of Disability Employment Services (RODES) and have a clear and present opportunity to base their services on the actual – rather than the assumed - reality of life for disabled people. There is a chance here for the government to demonstrate exemplary partnership work by 'joining the dots' of disability policy, rather than having different departments taking forward their own policy areas in parallel to others. A key player in this is the ODI, whose brief includes working across government and encouraging the various parts of government to work together. It is crucial also that the 'social care' agenda takes employment needs fully into account, and fits creatively with Disability Employment Services. Another key player could be Equality 2025, with a real opportunity to flex their muscles and take disabled people's own analyses direct into the government. And what of the Equality and Human Rights Commission? Surely there is a key role here for them to ensure that the DWP Disability Employment Services are available to the whole community of disabled people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, faith or age.

Might these things happen? I do hope so, but I suspect not, the agenda being so wide and creative, and the government – some are beginning to say – possibly not so keen on promoting independent living as they have said.

So finally, I offer a model of good practice in employing disabled people: Breakthrough UK Ltd is a voluntary sector organisation with an annual income of just over £1 million that has operated successfully for ten years, providing employment support to disabled people. It has developed organisational policies, management systems, and staff management practices that have resulted in the employment of 38 staff, 65% of whom are disabled people who were recruited openly. No government subsidies (except Access to Work), no specialist employment programmes, no quotas, just good management, good practice, and the will to do it. It's not rocket science, honestly.

NB – all statistics from the ODI 2007 Annual Report, and appendices.



Lorraine Gradwell



STOP PRESS

Project Extended

The Enter team are delighted to announce that due to additional WAG funding the project has been extended until May 31st. They will continue to take client referrals until May 2nd. Thanks to their A4E partnership Enter are also very happy to have just taken on their first Pathways to Work client.

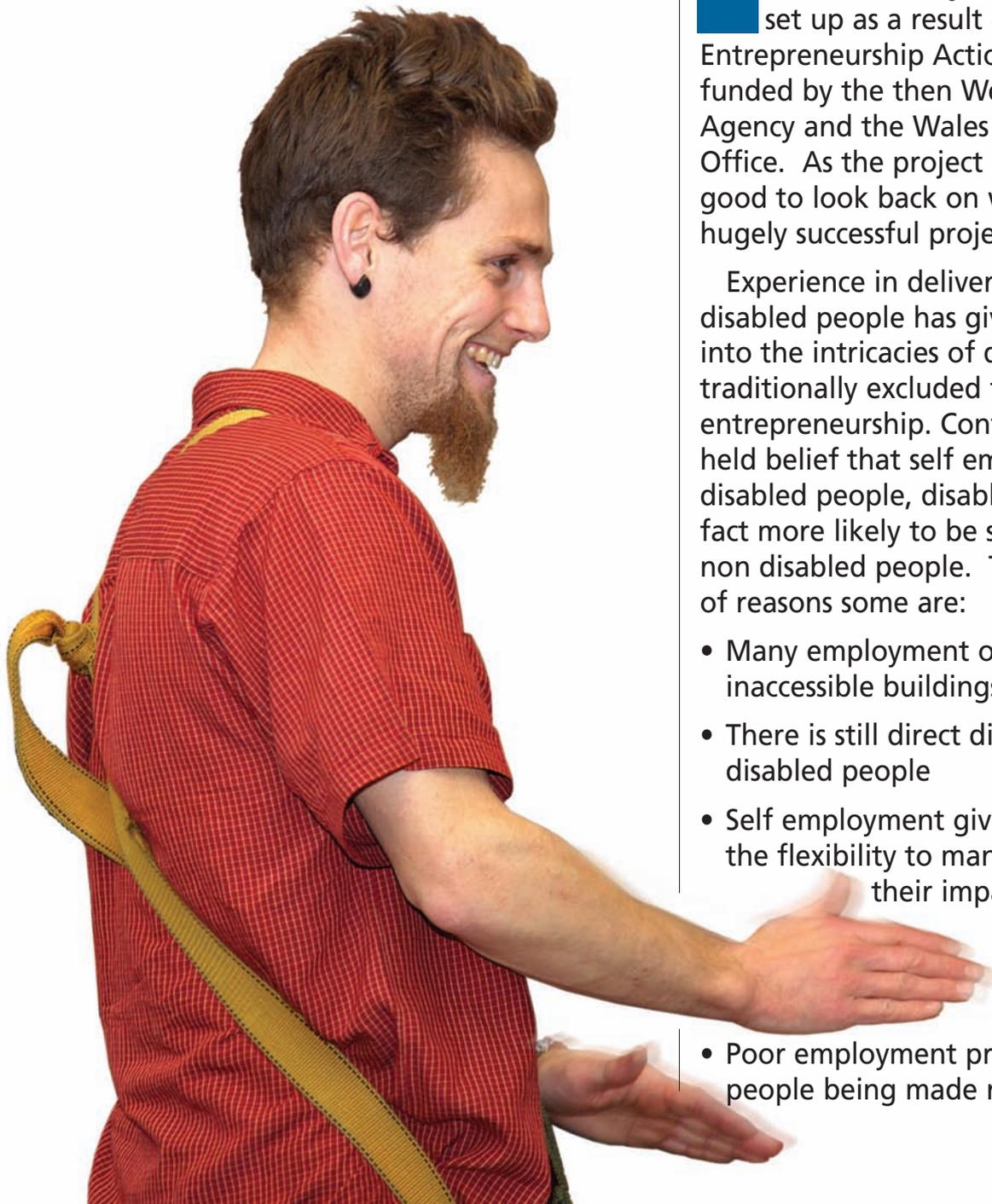
enter special

Project Manager,
Gail Williams sums up the past 6 years

Enter Disability Wales (Potentia) was set up as a result of the Entrepreneurship Action Plan and was funded by the then Welsh Development Agency and the Wales European Funding Office. As the project nears its end, it's good to look back on what has been a hugely successful project.

Experience in delivering this project to disabled people has given DW an insight into the intricacies of delivering to a group traditionally excluded from entrepreneurship. Contrary to the widely held belief that self employment is not for disabled people, disabled people are in fact more likely to be self employed than non disabled people. This is for a number of reasons some are:

- Many employment opportunities are in inaccessible buildings
- There is still direct discrimination against disabled people
- Self employment gives disabled people the flexibility to manage work around their impairment
- Poor employment practices can lead to people being made redundant



A retrospective on the road to success

- Self employment offers a means of gaining self respect and respect from others

It was essential to the success of the programme that it was a project of disabled people for disabled people, both for our clients' perspective and for mainstream business providers to see disabled people in a positive way.

By the end of November 2004 we had reached our 1000th client and achieved all the targets set for us by the Welsh Development Agency a milestone we never thought we would achieve back in 2001. Clients were coming to us via our direct marketing and through the mainstream business service providers who saw our services as complementary.

In some respects we have been a victim of our own success with an increase in referrals from Mainstream Business Support Services who disappointingly found it easier to refer to the project rather than offer the support within their own organisations.

“a hugely successful project of disabled people for disabled people. By the end of November 2004 Enter reached its 1000th client”

Since 2001 we have worked with 2,500+ disabled people and helped create 350+ businesses – an excellent success rate.

Through the life of the project our service delivery has had two main aspects, Positive Action including one to one client advice by a team of disabled advisers and the Enrich training scheme, and Mainstreaming including Disability Equality Training for Business Providers, advice and networking, access audits and consultancy.

Conclusion

The disability stream of Potentia and subsequently the Inclusion Project offered by Enter DW has been very successful in reaching a diverse range of disabled people who may not have previously considered self-employment. It assisted them in looking at self-employment as a viable option, and enabled clients to make an informed choice.

The mainstream element has also been successful with many business support providers willingly embracing accessibility for disabled people but there is still work to be done to provide a fully inclusive service to all under-represented groups.

Potentia was always designed as an intervention and underpinned by clear policies and guidance from WAG. It is for mainstream to take on the challenge of inclusion for all.

You can't win them all

A Trainer's Perspective

by Lyn Street

In the summer of 2002 when the Enter training tender went out, I was a relative unknown. I remember the stress and excitement of putting in my bid, and the pure amazement, joy and gratitude I felt when it was accepted. I'm forever in the debt of Mik Standing and his team for giving me my first big break. They obviously believed I had potential, although I was new and green with a lot to learn.

And I sure have learnt a lot! Training is tiring, leaving home early, getting home late and being on your toes all day. Training is stressful; deadlines can be tight and the work goes in peaks and troughs. Work shrinks; there's never as much in the end as you think there will be at the beginning, but it's also liberating; being your own boss is great. Best of all it's an opportunity to change disabled people's lives for the better.

When it comes to delivering training for Enter, the first hurdle to overcome is that participants have been 'sent' on the course. Most sessions have felt enjoyable and worthwhile, but a few have felt like pushing a heavy wheelbarrow up a steep hill where some people obviously feel they have much more important things to do. On a bad day, when, for example, I've met a patronising taxi driver and nearly missed my train due to the lack of proper

announcements, I find it offensive that anyone can think there are 'more important things' than exploring how the world can be made a better place for minority groups. If I can connect with people on a human level, I can more easily persuade them that we disabled people are 'worth it'.

Many participants assume that the law will form the major part of the course and are surprised when we only allocate 30 minutes for the DDA. Getting the law out of the way first allows the doubters to start in their comfort zone and then leaves the way clear for more interesting things.

Some business advisers have never before been challenged to think and talk about disability and find it difficult. But this is the part of the course in which journeys begin. Some people haven't, perhaps, realised how disabled people are perceived and treated. They might start by thinking of disability as a medical state, then begin to understand the social aspects and agree that the medical model

"We explore what barriers exist and, come up with practical ways of removing them"

is a negative way of understanding and responding to disability and that it will get us nowhere.

During the course we explore the legal, business and moral arguments for including disabled people, and participants realise they must, if they haven't already, give serious thought to the ways in which their service is provided. We then explore what barriers exist, and come up with practical ways of removing them. This involves looking at attitudes, communication, assistance, accessible formats and access in its wider sense.

Typical objections to this approach include "Nice idea, but it's a utopia," and "But what about the cost?" But the big questions are, "How much actually changes?" and "Is it easier now for disabled people to get an appropriate service from mainstream business advisers?"

For me, the world of business can sometimes feel cold and 'hard nosed'. It's a world in which people want facts and figures and some people change only because the law says they must, not because they want disabled people to have a better deal. At times it's a scary place for someone like me, however, I reconcile myself with the knowledge that our training programme was considered the most successful module of the Potentia Partnership's diversity training and that you can't win them all but every little helps.

Message from the Front Line

The Client Advisers' story

Janet, Jill, Jane, Jon, Bill, Paul, Terry and Andy are the advisers that provide the one to one support to individuals looking to start up businesses. To date we have worked with 2,700 individuals.

The measurable outcomes can be seen by the numbers of people who have gone on to set up a business but there are some softer outcomes that have been equally rewarding. Many of us have seen some clients, who may not have gone ahead and started a business, grow in self confidence and move on to do other things like further training / qualifications, voluntary work or paid employment.

Thank you Enter Disability Wales by **Philip Pashley**

Two years ago I contacted Enter when I was considering self-employment. I was pleasantly surprised that there was someone working for the project close to home and delighted when I found that person was Andy Lewis. I first met Andy almost 30 years ago when he was scoring goals, playing football for Sennybridge under 11s. Knowing I would be working with a local person was a great start.

Mine is an invisible illness, rooted in the

depths of depression, where confidence and self esteem are taken away. Our first meeting went well. My collection of poems, "Interesting People", went down well, probably due to a shared sense of black humour. Working with a disabled person who was able to show genuine empathy and understanding was a refreshing change.

Andy found TAPS (Training and Performance Showcase). I had to submit a storyline, was accepted and offered a 3 day Scriptwriting Course. I didn't expect the course to be easy, indeed it was not, it was extremely tiring. But initial feedback has been good. I am now awaiting a response to my final draft.

I'd like to thank Enter Disability Wales, an organisation that has and is still pointing me in the right direction

Rob Shaw A Balloonologist with a Mission

If you had seen Rob Shaw a year ago, you wouldn't have known that he had a mission: "To make someone happy; to turn crying into delight". For eight years Rob had worked for Barclays Bank, but now his world was falling apart. He'd separated from his long-term partner, lost his house, his job and was deep in debt. There seemed no escape from the depression and illness that resulted.

However, he'd always enjoyed juggling as a hobby. A self-taught amateur juggler, Rob found that improving his skills helped to take his mind off his troubles, and this therapy paid off in an extraordinary way.

Late in 2006, Rob spent his last money on a juggling magazine with a free pack of modelling balloons inside. Once back in his room he discovered a latent talent: he could model balloons, going far beyond the simple guides in the magazine. The modelling became his main therapy. His models were amazing in scope and size, for example, a full sized motor-bike.

About the same time, the Job Centre suggested that he speak to Client Adviser, Bill Ellis-Jones. Bill was impressed with Rob's skill and inventiveness, and together they explored the possibilities for money making. Rob worked on a sound business plan with Bill's support, a grant submission was made, and in November 2006 Rob was booked on a course with the National Association of Balloon Artists and Sculptors in Manchester, with all expenses paid.

From there, everything started to happen. *Bubblezone* was formed with Gavin, another juggler, face-painter and balloonologist. Rob hawked full-sized balloon Christmas trees round major Wrexham stores, and offered balloon entertainment, with juggling, at birthday parties.

In Spring 2007, Rob was booked for a month on the Irish ferry, living on the ship,



and entertaining adults and children alike. He found himself with a booking agent and has been invited to entertain at celebrity birthday bashes. Rob recently spent 6 days on a 45-thousand-ton cruise liner off Spain, entertaining passengers and crew over Christmas.

Rob is very clear in his support for Disability Wales and the ENTER Programme. "Without ENTER, I wouldn't be where I am today, the support and clear advice, and above all the belief in me, were exactly what I needed." Rob, today, is a very happy man. "Putting a smile on a kid's face is worth more than anything money could buy."

We all feel that it has been of major benefit that DW engaged freelance advisers with experience of setting up and running their own businesses. As advisers with impairments and first hand self

employment experience it has been relatively easy to gain credibility with the people we have been working with. Likewise, for a project that has covered the whole of Wales, the specific local knowledge provided by regionally based advisers, free to network in their own area, has been invaluable. Networking has a direct correlation to the numbers of new clients we were able to attract. DW could learn from this in its efforts to attract new members.

On the face of it 2,700 people contacting Enter during the project looks impressive and has satisfied targets set by the funders but we need to be mindful of the fact that there are approximately 400,000 disabled people living in Wales. We have only just scratched the surface!

The fear is that there will still be some good and some not so good organisations delivering new business start up support services so it is important we don't assume that everything is now ok. Disabled people need to keep a close eye on what is being delivered in their local areas and speak up if things are not being done correctly.

Let's not forget there is a vast amount of experience and expertise within Enter DW and the team of advisers that now needs to be utilised. We have all immensely enjoyed working on the project. Advisers have come and gone and we would like to thank them and everyone else who has supported the project over the years.

Exit Enter

Rhian Davies, DW's Chief Executive, on the success of the project



“By the way, we’ve signed a £1million contract with the WDA” was how I was informed of the Enter DW project when I started as Chief Executive of Disability Wales in October 2001.

The Project which was part of the Potentia Partnership was aimed at supporting disabled people interested in forming their own business. Enterprise was a new area of work for me and also a new departure for DW itself as it had made its name in areas such as access, aids and equipment, and benefits information. We were immediately on a massive learning curve. We quickly appreciated that delivering on a contract is different from spending a grant, as well as the impact on an organisation when project funding is

higher than the core grant. We were also concerned about the targets to get so many people into self-employment given the significant barriers facing disabled people in taking up any kind of work. Above all we had to learn the new language of enterprise such as ‘assists’, ‘start-ups’ and ‘SMEs’ not to mention ‘NBSPs’ and other agencies with whom we were now working.

We struggled over whether this was the right area of work for us to be involved with. The project was primarily aimed at individuals although it also worked with business advice agencies to improve access to their services. It could not tackle the benefits trap and we were concerned about being part of the Government agenda to increase economic activity among disabled people.

As the project developed and we built an excellent team of staff, client advisors and trainers so our confidence grew and we recognised the contribution that we could make to this area. Through the project we have reached thousands of disabled people, the vast majority of whom are not involved in disability organisations and we have introduced them to an understanding of the Social Model of Disability. The hundreds of disabled people we have supported to set up their own business from glass making to gothic clothing websites are a testament to the talent, skill and creativity within our community. In creating their own job

disabled people have taken control of their working lives and developed a role to suit their own needs.

Furthermore this project has increased our circle of influence and enabled us to move beyond the health and social care arena. It has brought the equality and rights of disabled people into the heart of government plans on economic development firstly through the WDA and now with the Department of Economic Development and Transport. We have delivered Disability Equality Training to officials and advice agency staff, and undertaken access audits at their premises and advised them on how they can provide an inclusive service.

Our expertise on disability equality issues in general and self-employment in particular is recognised and respected. We are now approached to join major partnerships in the sphere of economic activity. These include Empower Cymru, the successor to Potentia, and Business Dragons, a consortium including Chambers of Trade, the TUC and Third Sector organisations. Both initiatives are bidding for European Convergence Funding. We are also working with A4E, the company that secured the Pathways to Work contract. We will provide advice on self-employment, working at all times from the Social Model of Disability and our aim is to share this knowledge and understanding with partners in the programme.

Working within economic development

can be uncomfortable when it appears that the priority is cutting the benefits bill rather than creating barrier free working and learning environments. Sound bites such as 'sick note Britain' stigmatise people on benefits and only increase people's exclusion and sense of failure. The fact that there are 2.7 million people on Incapacity Benefit says more about the way the workplace operates than the individuals concerned.

It is vital that DW and organisations like it are players in developing and shaping economic policy and in delivering services to people wishing to be economically active, whilst also campaigning for appropriate support for those unable to work. It is a difficult balancing act however life is nothing if not complex. I am proud of the way that DW has met its targets for supporting people into self-employment while not compromising on its values. In doing so it has championed disability equality among disabled people as well as agencies operating in the hard-nosed world of economic development.



Remploy



Steve Scott is External Relations manager of Remploy, the UK's leading provider of employment services for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, and a member of the Equality 2025 committee. As a disabled person, he has first hand knowledge of some of the social barriers disabled people face – especially in employment. His role involves liaising with key stakeholders and promoting Remploy. Here, Steve gives his thoughts on disability, employability, and the unique steps Remploy is taking to unite the two.

I've been with Remploy for 20 years, having moved from a background in Personnel and Human Resources. During this time I have seen significant changes, not only in Remploy's own view of the employment of disabled people, but also in the disability movement – which, whilst more radical, has influenced Remploy's thinking. Society as a whole has begun to change, for example, rightly accepting disabled children into mainstream education.

That said, it's not plain sailing – there are still multiple barriers disabled people face accessing the skills they need to progress in employment, find their first job, or even navigate the public transport system.

I haven't always had the confidence to strive for the qualifications I wanted, or develop in a career of my own choosing and have had the experience of being rejected because of my disability. Now I have a role where I'm able to engage with a wide range of disabled people's organisations and listen to differing views. Being a member of Equality 2025 allows me to talk to people in key positions and hopefully influence their thoughts and ideas when it comes to implementing



the Welsh capital it has already found over 120 jobs for disabled people. The service and level of support the branch provides varies depending on the needs of the candidate. A lot of disabled people just want help with their CV, some hints and tips and pointed in the right direction, whilst others may require support to develop their

policies that impact on disabled people.

What concerns me greatly are the barriers disabled people face as a result of the lack of skills they've been equipped with, not through any fault of their own, but through the decisions other people, or organisations have made for them. This is evident at an early age, with disabled people's expectations in life lower than non-disabled even before they leave primary school. This impacts on individual confidence and self esteem and is simply made worse when people are continually rejected for employment, promotion, or learning opportunities.

The changes Remploy is making, including opening up new high street branches, is so important, promoting mainstream employment opportunities for disabled people, allowing similar access to the labour market as non-disabled people enjoy.

The Remploy branch in Cardiff is a prime example. It's highly visible, providing specialist recruitment and development services. Opened in May, in the heart of

vocational skills relative to the employment options they're considering.

The branch addresses the needs of both these groups, providing a range of services including team building and leadership skills development, which includes taking people off site, the same as any other leadership development programme. We see these programmes as an effective way to boost confidence and develop decision making competences.

"Remploy has had factories providing employment since the 1940's. As the Welsh economy has changed, so has Remploy to change"

Of course, Remploy has had a strong presence in Wales for a long time, with factories providing employment since the 1940's, though as the Welsh economy has changed, so has Remploy to change.

I believe this is a change which has to be made. Disabled people shouldn't be forced into segregated education, have lower learning expectations, put up with poorer delivery of health care or expect segregated employment. The aim of the modernisation is to significantly increase the numbers of people in work, provide greater opportunity to develop vocational skills, which in turn will enhance the number of disabled people promoted in employment.

Remploy also works with people who become disabled, or develop a long term health condition whilst in employment. It is simply wrong for people in this situation to have to leave their job, when given the right support early enough they are able to remain in employment. The employer doesn't lose the valuable skills the individual has and the individual doesn't feel they no longer have a valuable contribution to make.

Remploy worked with over 900 people last year, who were already in mainstream employment, but had developed a disability, or long term health condition and were concerned they would not be able to continue in work. Nearly 400 of these people live and work in Wales. All these individuals remained in their jobs

“disabled people shouldn't be forced into segregated education or expect segregated employment”

through the support provided by Remploy.

Remploy manages a European Social Fund (ESF) project, Healthy Minds at Work project, supporting individuals who develop mental health issues, including stress, anxiety or depression, to remain in employment. The project is made up of over 20 partners, including employers, trade unions, support groups and disabled peoples organisations, providing advice, guidance and support to both the employers and employees.

These changes and new projects are an expansion of jobs and choice for disabled people, not a cut back.

I believe these views are reflected by many people in Wales, including user led groups, campaigning organisations and social enterprise firms. Whilst I understand any change takes time to come to terms with, the proposals are in line with the views of many disabled people, both in the disabled people's movement and those who just want a job.

Disability Employment Advisory Committee

Arthur Blacklock, DEAC Secretary, DWP

I am pleased to have this opportunity to share with MTW's readers some information about the Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC). Although DEAC is an internal Committee it sets great store on ensuring that it engages with external organisations and individuals to find out what are the barriers affecting disabled people trying to access and stay in employment and what is being delivered elsewhere to overcome those barriers. That is why we have been pleased to welcome Rhian Davies to DEAC's meetings in Cardiff in the last two years to bring DEAC up-to-date with the good work being taken forward and planned by Disability Wales. DEAC is keen to learn from new ways of working in different parts of Great Britain.

DEAC was established in 2002 to provide strategic and confidential advice to DWP

Ministers and officials on the barriers that disabled people face in getting and keeping work and what is needed to overcome those barriers. Although it is an internal and confidential Committee it has an external Chair and 14 external Members.

DEAC wants to see disabled people who want a job, including those who may consider work to be beyond their reach, to receive appropriate job-focused support, get a job, do well in their job, stay in their current job or move into a better job and develop sustainable careers.

To deliver this, DEAC believes that the most appropriate strategy is a positive focus on support through the mainstream. It recognises though that specialist labour market measures have a considerable role to play where the assessment identifies more complex barriers to employment. But in all cases the emphasis must be on an individual approach.

This year DWP officials engaged DEAC in a number of areas central to the Government's Welfare to Work agenda. In particular DEAC considered the Welfare Reform Green Paper and Pathways which continues to be a major part of the strategy with its planned national roll-out. The City Strategy was also introduced and most recently the *In work, better off* Green Paper. DWP officials have involved DEAC in discussions with all of these. Earlier in the year, DEAC was pleased to have an opportunity to share its knowledge with

the Office for Disability Issues team undertaking the Independent Living Review.

Most recently DEAC has been working with officials on issues surrounding employment of people with mental health problems. In the past DEAC has deliberately not focussed on impairment specific issues. However, because people with mental health problems fare so badly in employment terms, the Minister for Disabled People invited DEAC to consider mental health and employment, which it agreed to do. The increased emphasis on this area and additional support being made available has of course been welcomed by DEAC.

The next 12 months will see DEAC continuing to work with Ministers and officials on those key issues relating to the employment of disabled people, for example, the consultation on the Review of Disability Employment Services and the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act. In common with DWP the Disability Employment Advisory Committee will also be looking wider as issues such as skills and transition from education to employment go wider than one department. Experiences of organisations such as Disability Wales in working across boundaries will continue to be sought and valued.

More detailed information can be found from DEAC's website www.deac.org.uk or by ringing 0114 267 7242.

Making a reality

Trade unions can rightly be proud of their contribution to disabled people's ongoing struggle to achieve equal rights. But achieving that objective remains a distant prospect. One of the major obstacles continues to be the fact that so many disabled people who want to work – and who can work – are unable to get or retain a suitable job. Unions are in a good position to help change this situation, but too many employers are still reluctant to play their part.

With disability discrimination law having undergone many changes in recent years, British society is changing fast in its willingness to recognise and celebrate diversity and difference, but all too often disabled people are being left behind.

Much has changed for disabled people over the past few years, but a great deal remains unchanged too.

Changing the law has proved to be the easy part of a much greater challenge – that of ending the social exclusion of many millions of disabled people. Trade unions play a key role in challenging this exclusion, through contributions in the workplace and in negotiations with employers, as well as through their broader role in society.

the rhetoric

By Christopher Hartwell, Assistant Research, Campaigns & Organising Officer, Wales TUC Cymru



The obstacles in the way of turning such a vision into practical reality are numerous and powerful, and they are present across the whole of society. We know disabled people face disadvantage and discrimination at all stages of the route to employment at work, in finding work, and in education and training

Trade unions have worked with others to improve legal rights and have represented disabled members in securing those rights.

The new legislative duties brought about under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) provide the opportunity for an unprecedented step forward and unions are finding new ways in which they can

ensure, by working in partnership with employers, that the potential of the new laws to challenge the disadvantage faced by the millions of disabled people in Britain is fully exploited.

Trade unions recognise that the potential of these new duties, not least the Disability Equality Duty (DED), to transform the lives of disabled people is immense: but if this is to be achieved, the duties have to be approached with the right intentions. Merely acting to comply with the law will not bring the changes that might otherwise be obtained and the express objective of ending discrimination against disabled people in Britain by the year

2025, as contained in Government's Strategy Unit paper *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, will not be met.

The Welsh Dimension

Wales has one of the highest levels of disabled people in Britain combined with one of the lowest employment rates for disabled people.

Of course, disabled people face discrimination in other ways too. Disabled women, for example, are also subject to gender discrimination with the combined result that a disabled woman can expect to earn less than half the average weekly wage of a non-disabled man working in Wales.

Trade unions have been working in Wales across the six equality strands to bring about workplace equality in Wales, working on key workplace disability issues within the context of a social model of disability. Trade union officers are trained to advise and represent people who are experiencing harassment or discrimination in the workplace.

One story to recently hit the headlines, which highlights the trade union movement's commitment to protect disabled people in the workplace, is the hard-fought campaign to stop the proposed closure of Remploy factories across Wales. The publicity generated around the campaign to save Remploy

“changing the law has proved to be the easy part of a much greater challenge – that of ending the social exclusion of many millions of disabled people”

factories across Wales demonstrates the determination and impact trade unions can have representing disabled people and workplace disability issues. However, it is the tip of a much bigger iceberg and fails to do justice to the breadth and depth of relentless equality work which now underpins much day to day trade union activity, which is deconstructing more subtle, complex layers of workplace discrimination.

As a result of the 'Snakes and Ladders' report, published in 2003, which proclaimed Wales as an 'advice desert' for providing accurate equalities support services, Wales TUC set up the Equal at Work project.

Equal at Work implements the key recommendations of the 2003 report and provides a central point in Wales for developing the capacity and expertise of trade unions in supporting and advising on equality and discrimination issues.

The project supports trade unions through the development of tailored training, seminars and resources, including a website and campaign materials, encouraging the development of good practice.

The Equal at Work website is a one stop shop for information on equality including a section on disability equality and discrimination. The Wales TUC supported two seminars last year on Women and Disability, organised by the Equal Opportunities Commission and Disability Wales.

Dedicated staff support projects which improve equality practices in all types of business organisations and three seminars have been run which were aimed at developing knowledge and strong partnership working for reps with their employers. The *Bargaining for Equality* training is aimed at giving all reps the knowledge and skills to mainstream equality - disability equality is a key priority within that.

The project also provides a central point for collectively campaigning on issues such as creating statutory rights for Equality reps.

The Wales TUC Equal At Work Project has recently commissioned the Bevan Foundation to undertake a research report which aims to support unions in Wales to promote equality and challenge discrimination in the workplace by

identifying the barriers, understanding current strategies and approaches and highlighting good practice which partly takes a look at barriers faced by disabled people in the workplace. The work will be published later this year.

Re-thinking Equalities

Other significant developments have also marked a sea-change in the prominence of the equalities agenda.

Since October there has been one Government equalities body in Wales taking on this whole, challenging agenda. This new agency, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has taken over the functions of the existing Disability Rights Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales. It also has responsibility for tackling discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, age and sexual orientation and promotes awareness of and understanding of human rights.

It is a positive step forward, bringing synergies and economies of scale. Those of us suffering from discrimination at work can go to one place for advice and information. It can support multiple discrimination issues far more easily. The helpline is open longer.

At the same time, the Government is developing a Single Equality Bill, aimed at

“...a disabled woman can expect to earn less than half the average weekly wage of a non-disabled man working in Wales”

creating a clearer and more streamlined discrimination legislative framework which produces better outcomes for those who currently experience disadvantage. Currently there is stronger protection for certain groups that experience discrimination. The Government's proposals, if implemented, would go a long way to addressing this obvious unfairness.

The Wales TUC will be working closely with the new EHRC. As key social partners in Wales, Wales TUC will seek to influence the strategy and work programme of the CEHR to ensure the interests of working people are at its heart. We are proposing a new advisory committee to link with trade unions and ensure the stories and experiences of half a million Welsh trade unionists are heard by this mighty new body.

Recognising the shifting equalities culture, and the impact of the EHRC's remit to strengthen its policy impact and restrict its casework to strategic public interest cases, trade unions in Wales have been preparing new strategies to develop their role as equality champions ensuring businesses in Wales are meeting equalities duties.

Equality Champions

Trade unions in Wales are at the forefront of the campaign for greater workplace equality. Many unions have a Disability Committee and hold specific conference events about workplace disability issues. All are campaigning for an end to discrimination, and unions are committed to putting in place statutory equality reps and strengthening their own impact standing up for equalities across Wales.

If you would like to find out more about what trade unions in Wales are doing to promote better workplace equality, visit www.equalatwork.org, and if you would like to influence and be part of the trade union movement or ensure your rights are protected at work visit unionfinder at www.worksmart.org.uk/unionfinder/ and find out which trade union can give you the most effective representation in your employment sector.

Networking Events

by Karen Jones, DW's Disability Networks Co-ordinator

The aim of these one-day events, held every three to four months in different regions, is to encourage, empower and build the confidence of disabled people. Networking provides a great opportunity for people from different areas, groups and organisations to meet, share information, experiences and support each other.

Each set of events focuses on a different theme, for example, Employment, Hate Crime, Independent Living, The Social Model and The Media. At each event two or three people give a presentation and share relevant information. We then have the opportunity to discuss and raise issues in informal small groups.

'Knowledge is power' and these events aim to give us all more. At the Employment events we were able to find out about support for disabled people in employment and self-employment, while at the Hate Crime events we discussed police policy and how it is being implemented. We received fascinating insights at the Media events into the world of the local media and how to use it to your advantage.

Attendances vary from 20 to around 50. Disability Wales is run by disabled people for disabled people, however, non-disabled people are often interested in coming as

well. Remember that these events are your events, and if there are topics you would like to see covered please get in touch! Finding a large enough, accessible venue in a good geographical location can be a challenge. If anyone comes across a new one in their travels, I am always open to new suggestions!

Disability Wales also supports independent groups that are run or organised by disabled people. We can offer training and encouragement to assist groups to set up and be truly self-run, not depending on 'professionals' or outside agencies.

I also spend time building up, improving and maintaining links with groups of disabled people in Wales. Currently I am focussing on particular areas where Disability Wales is less well-represented and building bridges through local voluntary councils to find groups of disabled people who we are not in touch with.

I hope this has given you a flavour of a few of the ways Disability Wales seeks to encourage and empower disabled people striving to achieve rights, equality and choice. Why not come along and experience it for yourself at one of the regional networking events we are holding in 2008. Hope to see you there!

Access to Work

Access to Work (AtW) began in June 1994 replacing and expanding on several smaller schemes providing support to disabled people.

It helps the Government achieve its key objectives to encourage greater independence, provide work for those who can and promote work as being the best route to inclusion for disabled people. It is an effective and popular programme and has grown consistently since the first year (1994-95) when nationally £15.7m was spent and helped around 10,300 people. In 2006-07 overall spend was £59.7m and helped around 28,500 people, whilst the budget for 2007-08 is £64m. The statistics for Wales also reflected this consistent trend in growth with 1024 people helped in 2005-06 with a spend of 2.1 m rising to 1155 people helped in 2006-07 with 2.2m spent, and a projected figure of 1212 people helped in 2007-08 at a spend of 2.26m. The aims of the programme are to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people by offering practical help, and to provide advice to disabled people and their employers to help them to overcome work-related obstacles resulting from disability. It also aims to enable disabled people to work on a more equal basis with their non-disabled colleagues,



and offers grants towards additional costs incurred in the workplace as a direct result of the person's disability.

To be eligible for help, the applicant must have a disability or health condition as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act that affects their ability to carry out their job. They must be over 16 years old, be in, or about to start, paid employment (including self-employment)

and not be claiming Incapacity Benefit once they are in work (with the exception of Permitted Work). Access to Work provides grants towards the total cost of approved support. The level of the grant will depend on whether the customer is employed or self-employed, how long they have been in their job and the type of help required. AtW will pay grants of up to 100% for unemployed people starting a job, all self-employed people and people who have been working for less than 6 weeks when they first apply for AtW. They will also pay grants of up to 100% for Support Workers, additional Travel to Work and Travel in Work costs, and Communication Support at Interview. Cost sharing only applies to Special Aids and Equipment (SAE), Adaptations to Premises & Equipment (APE) and Miscellaneous (Misc) elements of the programme when customers are employed (not self-employed) and have been in their job for more than 6 weeks. When cost-sharing applies, the cost-sharer (usually the employer) must pay the first £300 of any support costs and at least 20% of any approved costs between £300 and £10,000, with all costs above £10,000 being met by AtW.

There are seven elements within Access to Work:

- **Special Aids and Equipment (SAE)**

Provides grants towards aids and

equipment in the workplace which are needed as a direct result of disability

- **Travel to Work (TtW)**

Provides a grant towards the extra costs of travel to and from work where a person cannot use available public transport as a result of their disability or health condition or helps with adaptations to vehicles.

- **Travel in Work (TiW)**

Provides a grant towards the extra cost of travel incurred whilst at work, for example where a person cannot use available public transport as a result of their disability or health condition, help can also be offered with adaptations to vehicles.

- **Support Worker (SW)**

Provides human support in the workplace (such as BSL Interpreter) to allow the person to access their work environment

Examples of types of Support Workers: British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter, Buddy, Carer, Counsellor, Driver, Job-Aide, Job Coach, Job Designer, Lip Speaker, Mentor, Note Taker, Palantypist, Personal Reader, Travel Buddy

- **Adaptations to Premises and Equipment (APE)**

Helps modify premises and adapt

equipment to make it accessible for a disabled employee.

■ **Communication Support at Interview (CSI)**

A grant for an interpreter or other human support at job interviews for someone who has difficulties in communicating with others.

■ **Other support**

Other support that cannot be provided under any of the other elements.

Access to Work is delivered through a network of 11 AtW Business Centres located throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Each Business Centre is staffed by AtW specialists dealing with first contact, advice, and payments. Information about AtW and contact details for all Business Centres is available on:

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk and
www.direct.gov.uk.

Local Jobcentre Plus offices or DEAs can also put you in touch with your local Business Centre.

Case Studies:

Paul Lindoewood has cerebral palsy. He is a wheelchair user and also has hearing loss in both ears and severe communication

difficulties. Paul is a General Manager for Space for People (disabled persons housing service) where he leads a team of people to provide a housing service and his main duties include using a PC to produce notes, letters, spreadsheets and schedules. He also has to attend meetings and take notes. Access to Work has provided grants for assistive technology to enable Paul to use his PC. A support worker has also been funded to act as a job aide, carer and driver.

Trevor Palmer runs a leather trading and consultancy company which he started in 1998. Trevor is involved with a variety of disability organisations and does work for the Welsh Development Agency and Welsh Assembly Government. He delivers disability equality and awareness training and has been contracted to facilitate disability forums. Most recently he was involved with the Millennium Centre in Cardiff (a most prestigious building in the centre of the City) advising on disability access issues. He also successfully trades in wheelchair accessories (www.g1100.com) Trevor has MS and since he started trading, Access to Work has funded him to have a powered wheelchair, adaptations to premises e.g. disabled toilet, ramps and a support worker to act as a job aide, carer and driver. He has also had ergonomic and IT aides.

Above St Govan's Chapel

Caroline Gill



Caroline Gill is a member of the Poetry Society and has had a number of poems published, mainly in small press magazines. She lives with her husband David, an archaeologist, in a house overlooking Swansea Bay. Caroline suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and has had several joint replacements.

Above St Govan's Chapel,
© Caroline Gill

Why do you have to give me all those ups
and downs, steep gradients, steps of polished stone?
Are you to blame for these, your sea-washed shapes
that stealthy pirate boots once chanced upon?
It seems a shame that pilgrim feet can feel
the tug of centuries beneath the heel,
while I remain aloft and all alone.

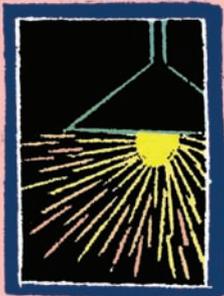
You do not need to lure me with your tales
of holy wells and hidden bells and more:
I'd love to scamper down and watch the seals,
who hide their secrets in St Govan's store.
I long to ride those waves, which rise and fall
like herring gulls that clip the turf, and scale
sharp pinnacles above the limestone shore.

You ask, don't I do stairs? - but my poor knees
do not take kindly to your weathered blocks
that perch like kittiwakes in crevices;
and lead down to the chapel in the rocks.
South-westerlies sweep all the birds away,
like Jacob's ladder stretching to the sky:
swifts rise on rungs of cumulus across the tracts
of ocean air. They shout out loud:
'It's great to be alive!'
I share their cry.



The Murder House

Catriona Tostin



With thanks to Paul Peter Piech

Catriona Tostin is the collective name of Arts Into Action, a group of young people with learning difficulties from Ceredigion. This poem came from drama games, visualisation and cut and shuffle techniques facilitated by Chris Tally Evans.

The vicious ballerina
Lives in
The murder house

She watches
As friends strangle
One another

He's the horse
She's the rider,
He falls and
Breaks a leg

The vicious ballerina
Dances in
The bad ballet school

Silence
Silence for the
Violence

Someone lies dead
People at the back say
"Let me join in
Let me join in"

The vicious ballerina
Strikes again in
The murder house

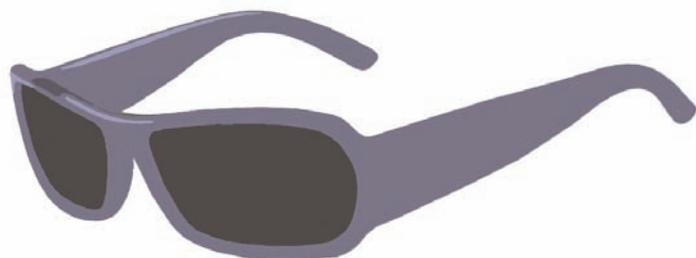
Invisible Blind Man

Andrew Hubbard

Andrew Hubbard followed the denial route of most disabled people. Society encouraged him to 'overcome' disability. Losing his career, but winning a DDA tribunal began a new life for Andrew. He has come out as a Disabled Person; he is proud of being different. Andrew passionately promotes Disabled People's culture; he believes denial of disability is the root of prejudice and discrimination.

Invisible Blind Man,
© Andrew Hubbard

invisible blind man passing through
 No one sees him, or sees who
 hopes behind reflective lens
 to hear, good day. OK?
 turned out nice; or, there's a day!
 invisible blind man may be deaf
 may be daft, some say all wise
 hear the hush fall on his foot fall
 laughter dies as eyes are bowed
 No joy allowed, they stand aside.
 invisible blind man aches to talk
 longs for idle chit chat, close tone
 craves dialogues with passers by
 not pitiful averted eye
 needs to tell them, needs to touch them.
 invisible blind man swings a cane
 marks his arc, his safety zone
 tap left, tap right, he counts his steps
 moves through time which marks his course
 stand still, hush still. Pray we are invisible.





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