



**ELECTION
2010**

A MANIFESTO FOR VALUING PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND

The establishment of the Scottish Government has seen important developments in the lives of people with learning disabilities. It has authority over many areas that affect their lives. The UK government does retain powers in a number of important areas that directly affect people with learning disabilities. This manifesto outlines what we think a new government in Westminster might do to further the benefits that have been achieved in recent years

MAKING EMPLOYMENT REALLY WORK

Most people with a learning disability want to work, and the evidence shows that they get the same satisfaction from working as anyone else. Most want employment in ordinary jobs.

In Scotland it is estimated that only one adult in 20 with learning disabilities has any form of paid work.

In an equal opportunity society, if any adult wants to work, support should be provided to make this possible. This is still not happening for people with a learning disability. There needs to be a more consistent approach to employment that is integrated into mainstream services.

We think this could be improved by the government ensuring that;

1. The DWP and Job Centre Plus recognise "learning disability" as a distinct group of people requiring support not just part of a wider group of people with mental health issues
2. The DWP properly monitor how many people with learning disabilities are claiming benefits and on work programmes
3. There is a programme of learning disability training awareness for all Job Centre Plus staff.
4. There is a strategy for public authorities to employ more people with learning

disabilities and to publish their progress in absolute numbers and as a percentage of their workforce.

5. The introduction of a specific national supported employment programme to help people with learning disabilities get work, develop career progression and improve the types of jobs that people are able to get. This should be funded through the Department of Work and Pensions but remain a distinct and separate employment initiative. The outcomes achieved by such a programme should be long term and personalised to the needs of the individual.
6. Access to Work needs to be greatly enhanced to include a national strategy on assistive technology, aids and equipment and extended to cover voluntary work.



AN ENABLING WELFARE BENEFITS SYSTEM

Most people with a learning disability do not have the opportunity to work. They live on benefits so people with a learning disability tend to be poor.

They have too little money to enable them to do the things they want to do.

They also have extra costs because of their disability – paying for things like support workers and door-to-door transport, such as taxis. We believe there is a need for significant benefit reform.

We think this could be improved by the government ensuring that

1. The level of disability benefits are sufficient to cover the additional costs of disability
2. There should be a continuing payment of Carers Allowance even after retirement from work.
3. The benefit claims process is easier through the use of simplified forms and more advisers having undergone learning disability awareness training.
4. Welfare benefits support the transition into work for people with learning disabilities by including a more flexible approach to the definition of hours of work, a gentler tapering of benefits as income rises beyond income disregard or permitted work levels and an extension of the Rapid Reclaim system when employment ceases to 52 weeks for people with disabilities.
5. There is central government support for an advice strategy to help prevent social exclusion for people with learning disabilities and their carers. This would identify support needs for individuals, provide face to face support and focus on better access to existing advice services.

EQUALITY FOR ALL

We believe that people with learning disabilities face great difficulties in overcoming discrimination. Intellectual disabilities are not easily recognised and many people with learning disabilities have developed wide ranging coping mechanisms in disguising their disability.

We believe that Equality legislation should be based on a comprehensive definition, which takes account of different circumstances and different types of disability, particularly between learning disability and physical disability.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of equality duties should be strengthened, with outside inspection by which the actions of a public authority can be measured and the outcomes of those actions evaluated.

There should be an improvement in dispute resolution and access to justice. People should be confident that there is a straightforward, clearly understood method for resolving difficulties.



The LEARNING DISABILITY ALLIANCE SCOTLAND campaigns with and for people with learning disabilities to achieve social change that makes a real difference to their lives. Its membership is drawn from voluntary organisations working with and supporting people with learning disabilities from all across Scotland.

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