

Pathways to social and job inclusion for people with disabilities

Workshop 1 - The use of social enterprise/social firms in supporting those with disabilities.

Background information

Social Enterprises are businesses that trade for community benefit and social purpose rather than personal profit.

Like conventional businesses, they offer goods and services, operate in many different trade sectors and can adopt many different business models. What makes them different is that instead of trading to maximise profits for owners and shareholders, social enterprises trade to achieve social objectives such as:

- Offering services that are currently unavailable or too expensive for the local community to use
- Providing education, training and employment opportunities for [people who are disadvantaged in the labour market
- Improve the local environment
- Providing social care or other welfare services that improve the quality of life of their users

Social Firms are a specific variant of social enterprise. Their social purpose is to employ people who are especially disadvantaged in the labour market. This disadvantage may arise from physical or sensory disability, or from other factors which prevent clients from accessing opportunities in the labour market. The Social Firms sector in the UK comprises 151 businesses. Of these, 70 meet the Social Firms UK criteria as full Social Firms and 81 are regarded as emerging Social Firms.

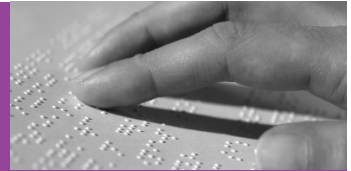
Social Firms UK is the national support structure for Social Firm development in the UK and has approximately 300 members. The national company represents the interests of the Social Firm sector and plays a key role in lobbying and dissemination activities.

Social Firms UK has adopted three core values that Social Firms subscribe to within their businesses, orientated around Enterprise, Employment and Empowerment:

Enterprise: Social Firms are businesses that combine a market orientation and a social mission ('businesses that support' rather than 'projects that trade');

- At least 50% of the firm's turnover is earned through sales of goods and/or services.
- The firm has an appropriate legal status. It must not be governed or driven by individual profit (except for worker co-operatives). Remote shareholders must not extract unreasonable profit.
- The firm is trading and follows business processes, such as having a business plan in place.
- The firm has a constitution or written guiding principles that reflect its employment objective concerning disadvantaged people.
- The firm has a management structure that supports trading as the firm's primary purpose.

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Employment Social Firms are supportive workplaces where the working environment is one that provides all employees with support, opportunity and meaningful work:

- More than 25% of employees are people disadvantaged in the labour market.
- All employees have a contract of employment and market wage at or above national minimum wage.
- An equal approach is taken to the type of employment contracts used (permanent, fixed term, temporary) between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged staff.
- The firm operates processes to engage employees in their own and the organisation's development.
- The firm has procedures and policies in place in respect of Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety.
- The firm is compliant with relevant employers legislation e.g. Disability Discrimination Act and National Minimum Wage.
- All employees have the opportunity to progress either within the Social Firm or into alternative employment as appropriate.
- The firm is acknowledged as a good employer by employees and stakeholders.
- The firm is acknowledged as a good employer through an external accreditation process.

Empowerment: Social Firms are committed to the social and economic integration of disadvantaged people through employment. A key means to this end is economic empowerment through the payment of market wages to all employees:

Question: Accessing employment for people with learning disabilities presents many challenges, how can social firms respond to these challenges? How can social firms provide effective solutions?

Workshop two – Mental health and depression

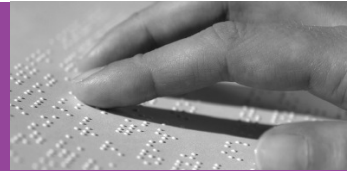
Background information

It is illegal to discriminate against Disabled People in the workplace under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Yet despite this and the many advances that have been achieved since the introduction of the Act many thousands of people with mental health problems continue to experience discrimination in the workplace. Hundreds of thousands more, who want to work, are not able to secure employment for no other reason than discrimination by employers.

What are the issues?

- The World Health Organisation estimates that 1:4 people will experience some form of mental health difficulty at some point in their life.
- Lack of mental well being in the workplace is costing the UK £25.9 billion per annum in terms of sickness absence, presenteeism and turnover.
- Research conducted by the Mental Health Foundation found that almost half (47%) of people who had experienced mental distress had experienced discrimination in the workplace.

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- Less than 40% of employers would consider employing someone with a mental health problem.
- Only 20% of people with mental health conditions are in employment.
- People with mental health problems have the lowest employment rate of all Disabled people of working age.
- At one million people, the numbers on incapacity benefit for reasons of mental ill health outnumber the total number on job seekers allowance.
- Someone who has been on Incapacity Benefit for more than two years is more likely to die or retire than get a job.
- Suicide rates amongst the long term unemployed are 35 times higher than amongst the employed.

In an age when the acceptance of difference and diversity has grown and has been legislated for, it is clear from the above that the stigma and misunderstanding of Mental Health is one area of inequality that remains to be challenged. The cost to employers, society, individuals and their families of failing to challenge Mental Health discrimination is immense.

If people experiencing Mental Health Difficulties are to enjoy the same rights as others within the work place it is essential that people experiencing Mental Health difficulties know what their rights are, that employers are proactive in ensuring mental well being in the work place and that appropriate policies are in place to prevent discrimination.

Question: How can the third sector & employers respond effectively to those suffering?

Useful Links

Mindful Employer: www.mindfulemployer.net

Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health: www.scmh.org.uk

Rethink: www.rethink.org.uk

Equality & Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com

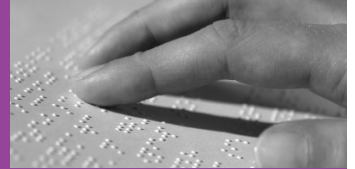
Workshop three – Myth Busting and Awareness Raising

Background information

In 2008 Birmingham Disability Resource Centre published an Action Research around the barriers that disabled people commonly experience when seeking employment. Amongst the key findings from the research included:

- Disabled people want to work but experience restrictive regulations within the benefits system
- Disabled people are more likely to enjoy fulfilling and sustainable employment when they work for a more flexible and supportive employer
- Communication support is vital to many disabled people and major barrier exists where it is not provided
- Many disabled people are not able to work because they need independent living support to be put in place first

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In spite of continuing high levels of unemployment amongst disabled people, the qualitative research carried out with 200 disabled people in Birmingham, showed that most disabled people express an interest in engaging in some sort of social economic activity, whether that be volunteer work, work experience social enterprise, self employment or working for an employer but feel that a whole range of barriers, including the ones listed above, conspire against their aspirations to work.

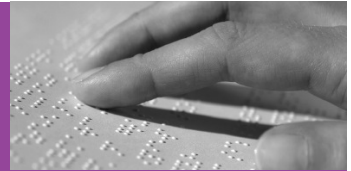
In 2005 the national organisation RADAR (Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation) published an 8 point paper which set out to challenge some of the myths around disabled people, benefits and employment (*Radar's Prescription for a healthy debate: dispelling 8 myths of Incapacity Benefit*). These 8 myths included:

- Myth 1: People on Incapacity Benefit are lazy and watch TV all day.
- Myth 2: People on Incapacity Benefit are fraudsters.
- Myth 3: People on Incapacity Benefit could get a job if they really wanted one.
- Myth 4: People on Incapacity Benefit are living a life of luxury.
- Myth 5: People on Incapacity Benefit already get lots of help from the Government.
- Myth 6: Employing disabled people is expensive; only big companies can afford to do it.
- Myth 7: Disabled people are less productive than non-disabled employees; they should stay on Incapacity Benefit.
- Myth 8: All we need are more ramps in the workplace, and disabled people will be able to go to work.

On each of these points, Radar offered research based evidence which argued that the majority of disabled people in receipt of incapacity benefit and / or income support and severe disablement allowance at that time wanted to either work or contribute to society through voluntary work, but required support.

It continues to be very clear that the weight of evidence gathered from research carried out by disability organisations and other agencies is that the vast majority of disabled people want to either work or otherwise contribute to their communities and to the social economy but that successive policies, initiatives, campaigns and legislative changes are still failing to achieve significant levels of sustainable, long term employment amongst disabled people. Research continues to show that many of the barriers are caused by discriminatory assumptions, anxieties, misconceptions and myths held by employers.

What more needs to be done to raise awareness with employers around disabled people?
How can disabled people be supported more effectively to achieve and progress in the workplace?

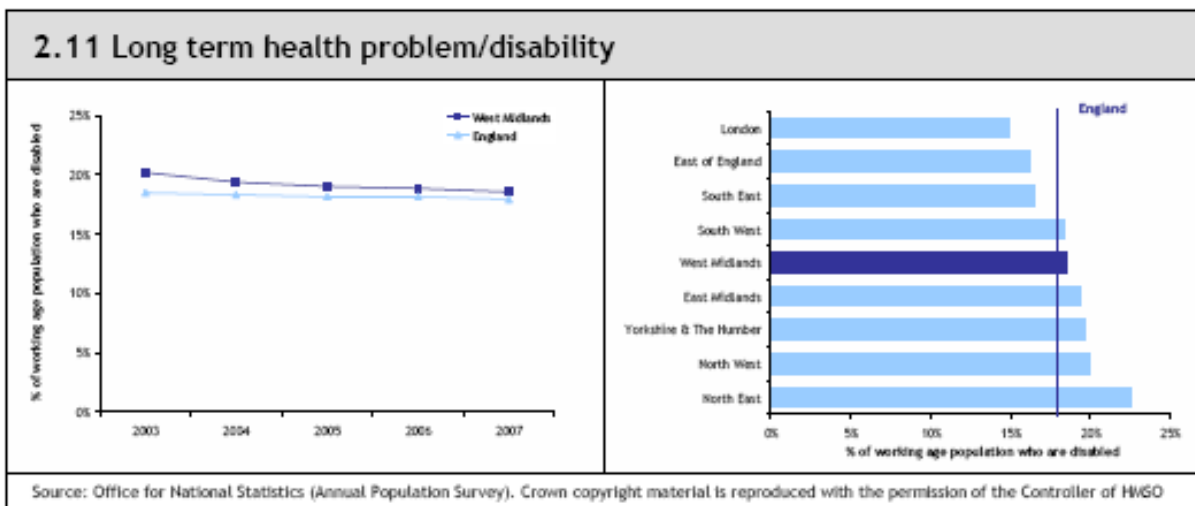


Disability

Briefing for OPEN seminar – Pathways to social and job inclusion for people with disabilities



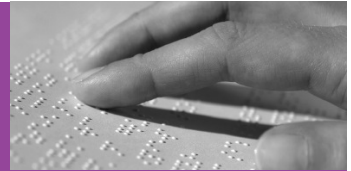
Just under 20% of the working age population in the West Midlands are disabled.¹ The region has above average rates of disability:



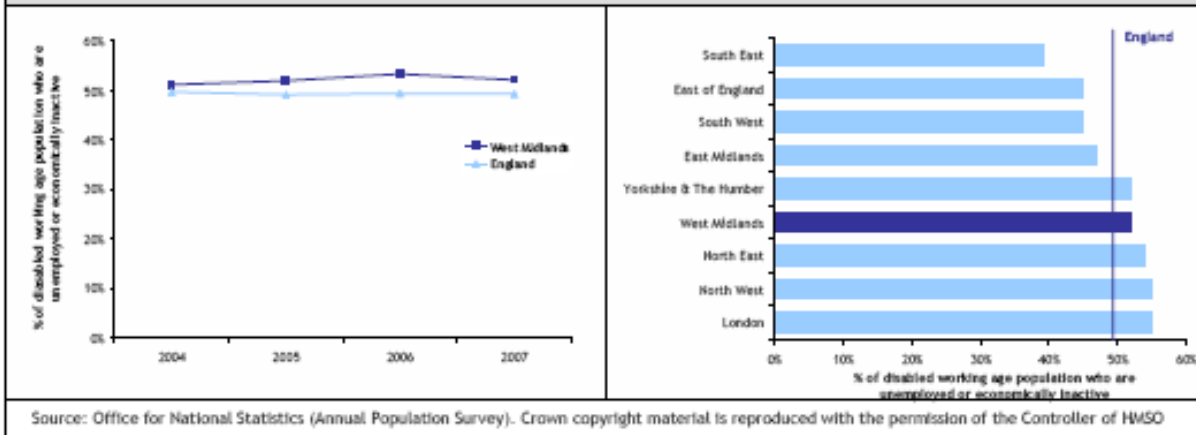
Poor health is one of the main contributing factors to worklessness, with high rates of worklessness among those reporting limiting health conditions. The region's rate of worklessness among those with long term health problems/disabilities is, at 52%, 3 percentage points above the national average.

¹ This definition of disabled includes people who are defined as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act and people who have a work-limiting illness/disability. It is measured through a survey.

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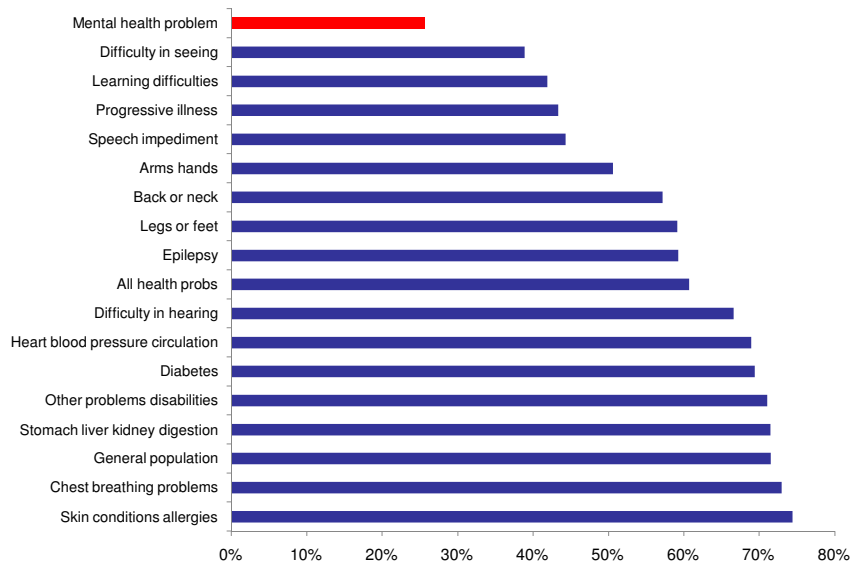


2.4 Worklessness rate of high risk groups: Disabled people



Employment rates for people with health problems vary considerably according to the type of health problem, from less than 30% to over 70%. People with mental health problems are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market:

Employment rates of people with health problems in West Midlands



Source: LFS April 08 - March 09 4Q average

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