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Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report to transform the life chances of disabled people

The Government has today published a radical strategy for transforming the life chances of disabled people. The final report "Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People" states that, by 2025, disabled people should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and be respected and included as equal members of society.

The joint DWP, DH, DfES, ODPM and PM's Strategy Unit report - which has been agreed as Government policy - makes recommendations across four key areas:

Independent living - increasing disabled people's ability to live independently at home, at work and in the community with support based on personal need, choice and empowerment through a major expansion of Direct Payments in the form of individual budgets.

Early years and family support - family-focused support, childcare and early education that enables families with young disabled children to achieve 'ordinary lives' and remain economically and socially included.

Transition to adulthood - planning focussed on the individual needs of disabled young people, based on smooth provision of support and services during transition and leading to appropriate opportunities and choices in adulthood.

Employment - early intervention supporting disabled people to stay in touch with the labour market; improving the employment prospects of disabled people through ongoing personalised support, with employers supported in a key role, while providing security for those unable to work.

A new Office for Disability Issues will also be established. It will be a strategic unit responsible for coordinating Government work on disability and ensuring that this fits with the wider equalities agenda.

The Prime Minister welcomed the report and said:

"The ideas outlined in this report will mean increased choice and control, personalised services and ultimately a better quality of life for disabled people. As a Government we remain totally committed to improving the opportunities for disabled people and I really believe that working together we can achieve this goal."

Maria Eagle, the Minister for Disabled People, said

"This report builds on the considerable achievements of this Government in combating disability discrimination and in delivering civil rights for disabled people through the Disability Discrimination Bill, which is currently going through Parliament. This report is the next step which sets out a radical vision for delivering choices and opportunities for disabled people over the next 20 years. It sets out a full programme of action to support disabled people in leading independent lives. This will lead to significantly greater participation and inclusion of disabled people in the economy and in society."

Stephen Ladyman, Community Minister at the Department of Health said,

"I welcome the Strategy Unit report as an important step towards ensuring greater independence for disabled people. Measures such as individualised budgets will give people more control by allowing them to purchase the services they need when they need them. The Government is committed to promoting independence. Later this year I will publish a green paper on adult social care - our plans to reform health and social care services to support and empower the people who use them."

The report is also welcomed by Lord Filkin at the Department of Education and Skills:

"I commend the Strategy Unit on this report which powerfully describes the situation facing many disabled children and young people and contains important policy recommendations which we at DfES are committed to taking forward in conjunction with our existing Change for Children Programme, and our work on the implementation of the Children's National Service Framework. The publication of this report gives us renewed momentum to improving the life chances of disabled children, young people and their families."

Minister at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Yvette Cooper, praised the report's focus on housing for disabled people and said:

'This report is a valuable contribution to improving disabled people's lives. It will help address the barriers they face in achieving independent living by increasing the accessibility of current and future homes.'

Notes to editors:

- The Final Report '**Improving the Life Chances of Disabled people**' was published today at 9.30am by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Copies of the report can be accessed via www.strategy.gov.uk in PDF format. A summary and easy-to-read summary are also available online.
- The report is available other formats including Braille and Word. Please contact the Strategy Unit on 020 7276 1881 or strategy@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk.

1. There are about 11 million disabled adults and children in the UK using the widest survey definition.

2. Feedback about this report and the project is welcomed. Feedback should be sent to:

Disability@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Or to:
Strategy Unit Disability Team
Cabinet Office
4th Floor, Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London SW1A 2WH

The deadline for responses is Friday 15th April 2005.

3. The Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People project was announced on 3rd December 2003. The Strategy Unit was asked to provide supporting analysis and a strategic assessment of disabled people's life chances - the opportunities available to disabled people, both children and adults, to improve their quality of life. This final report has been presented to the Prime Minister and to the Minister for Disabled People, Maria Eagle (Department for Work and Pensions).

4. The aim of the project has been to:

- Assess the extent to which disabled people are experiencing adverse economic and social outcomes in the UK;
- Identify why this is happening, and what are its implications; and
- Assess what could be done to improve the situation, in particular by making better use of existing resources.

5. The Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People sets out a twenty year vision for disabled people: "By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society".

6. The project includes a package of measures that extends choice and improves incentives for disabled people in four key areas: independent living, early years and family support, transition to adulthood and employment.

7. The strategy will now be driven forward by a new Office for Disability Issues reporting to the Minister for Disabled People. Annual reports on progress will be presented to the Prime Minister and published on the web.

8. The Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People project was organised in the following way:

- Phase One was an extended scoping phase where the Strategy Unit held meetings with disabled people, representatives of disabled people, service providers, government departments and other organisations. A review was undertaken of the literature and evidence base on disabled people's life chances. At the end of this phase the Strategy Unit highlighted areas for more detailed analysis and published the Interim Analytical Report.
- Phase Two consisted of a detailed analysis of the areas identified by the Strategy Unit in Phase One. The next step was to increase engagement with disabled people, representative organisations and other groups through discussion groups and other forums using the Analytical Report as a basis.
- Phase Three developed policy recommendations and a strategy to remove barriers and improve outcomes for disabled people based around a comprehensive vision for disabled people.

9. For this report the Strategy Unit worked with, and received input from many different people and organisations including:

- Disabled people;
- Representatives of organisations of disabled people;
- Carers and family of disabled people;
- Representatives of national and local disability related charities;
- Local government and other service providers; and
- Employers.

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