



## The 1<sup>st</sup> RADAR Debate:

“This House believes the majority of disabled people can and should work”

The Brit Oval, Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008

Edited Transcript of the Opening Address  
By Lord McKenzie of Luton  
Parliamentary Under Secretary  
Department for Work and Pensions

Followed by Questions from the Floor

14 BILL MCKENZIE: Thank you very much for the opportunity to  
15 be here today and perhaps I can start also by conveying  
16 the apologies of my colleague Anne McGuire who as you  
17 said is unwell. I'm pleased to be here today and also  
18 most pleased you've chosen this particular topic for  
19 debate as I believe it goes to the very heart of  
20 understanding and ending the inequality disabled people  
21 experience in this country. I can see the speakers due  
22 to participate are second to none in their experience  
23 and understanding of disability and work. Indeed the  
24 fact that we're having this debate shows how far  
25 disability as an issue has come in this country, not so

1 long ago it was simply not on the political horizon and  
2 it was seen in some quarters as a political back water.

3 It was that sort of attitude that led to the record  
4 numbers receiving incapacity benefits and being allowed  
5 to stay there with no help or encouragement to do  
6 otherwise. Not so today. Today, disability is an issue  
7 at the very heart of Government thinking. Over the past  
8 10 years the equalities landscape in this country has  
9 changed I believe beyond all recognition. The life  
10 chances report in 2005 set out the aspiration of  
11 equality for disabled people by 2025, and set out a road  
12 map of how we get there. The Disability Equality Duty  
13 introduced in 2006 is beginning to change how public  
14 bodies serve disabled people. We took a lead role in  
15 negotiating the UN convention on the rights of disabled  
16 people. We published a 5-year Independent Living  
17 Strategy and we looked at how we can extend individual  
18 budgets to disabled people. At the same time, we should  
19 recognise that Government can only achieve so much in  
20 providing the economic and social independence that  
21 people rightly aspire to.

22 Therefore, we need to consider the role of work. We  
23 know that work is a force for good or good work is  
24 a force for good, and therefore that everyone should be  
25 offered the opportunity to participate in work. Anne

1           McGuire has stated that when she first started working  
2           alongside disabled people 25 years ago, the idea that  
3           disabled people could not get, let alone hold on to,  
4           a job, was unfortunately the prevailing view.  
5           Thankfully, we've moved a long way since then. Since  
6           1998, the number of disabled people in employment has  
7           increased by approximately 1 million. Just under  
8           1.9 million in 1998 to 2.8 million in 2007. To underpin  
9           our strategy for enabling disabled people to move into  
10          work, and to retain those jobs, we believe it's  
11          important to have a strong framework of disability  
12          rights. We gave a commitment to disabled people that we  
13          would provide them with comprehensive and enforceable  
14          rights. We've delivered on that commitment by  
15          significantly improving the Disability Discrimination  
16          Act, not least from 2004, when we extended the  
17          employment provisions to cover all employment, except  
18          service in the armed forces. There is strong evidence  
19          to show that people are using the legislation to enforce  
20          their rights. From 2004 to 2007, nearly 15,000 claims  
21          of disability discrimination were registered with  
22          employment tribunals. Whilst the medium award  
23          compensation in 2006/7 was just over £8,000 the highest  
24          award was nearly £140,000, which demonstrates how  
25          effective the legislation can be. Having put these

1 rights in place, the Government is delivering a second  
2 wave of policies to help disabled people into work, and  
3 today I want to concentrate on three important areas.  
4 The introduction of a new benefit, the employment and  
5 support allowance, the provision of extensive back to  
6 work help and support, and our further work with  
7 employers to ensure that there are job opportunities for  
8 disabled people.

9 At the end of October, the employment and support  
10 allowance will be taking the place of the current  
11 incapacity benefit. This new benefit will form  
12 a central part of a new culture for people who are  
13 unable to work through ill health or disability. One of  
14 the fundamental shifts in culture is that we really do  
15 expect most customers who claim employment and support  
16 allowance to move off it in time and not to remain in  
17 receipt indefinitely. Quite differently from the past,  
18 where once somebody had claimed incapacity benefit  
19 successfully, little was expected of them in the way of  
20 self-help. The whole structure of the benefits  
21 facilitates this. Only the most severely disabled will  
22 not be required to prepare for work. For the others,  
23 the majority in fact will have to think about work and  
24 to participate in interviews and perhaps prepare for  
25 work in a more active way.

1           Our recently published Green Paper, "No-one Written  
2           Off, Reforming Welfare to Reward Responsibility",  
3           includes plans to extend the new culture and higher  
4           expectation of individuals to existing customers of  
5           incapacity benefit. Otherwise, we would have two  
6           distinct routes which makes no sense at all. We would  
7           have a situation where new customers would benefit from  
8           work focus to work focus regime and support programmes.  
9           Those already in receipt, although able to volunteer for  
10          help, would largely be in ignorance of the support  
11          available and the possibilities this could open up for  
12          them.

13           We will, from 2009, start to apply the work  
14          capability assessment to existing incapacity benefit  
15          customers under age 25. We intend that by 2013 we will  
16          have applied the new medical assessment to all our  
17          existing customers. With the application of the new  
18          assessment will come the transfer to the employment and  
19          support allowance and the requirement for those placed  
20          in the work related activity group to engage with our  
21          back to work services.

22           The Green Paper asks for your views on whether we  
23          should go further with new customers and require them to  
24          engage in specific types of activity which will aide  
25          their return to work. We're consulting on several such

1 key issues and will be pleased to hear your views. We  
2 cannot, though, make conditions and raise expectations  
3 without having support and measures to tackle barriers  
4 to employment in the mix.

5 We have demonstrated how important we consider this  
6 by committing an extra £650 million of investment on  
7 back to work support as a result of the Green Paper  
package. This on top of the existing

9 £1.1 billion we're spending on Pathways to Work in the  
10 next 3 years. I'm pleased to say a key part of the  
11 additional Green Paper investment is as was referred to,  
12 a doubling of the access to work budget. Access to work  
13 will help around 24,000 people to gain or stay in  
14 employment this year but with the expansion in budget,  
15 we expect to be helping around 48,000 people by 2013-14.  
16 We know this is a well regarded programme but we are  
17 asking for views as to how it can be made more  
18 responsive and flexible and we would like to know how better  
19 to help people with fluctuating conditions and what more  
20 we need to be able to do to help our customers to meet  
21 the new work focused requirements. Many of you here  
22 will know we have also consulted this year on proposals  
23 to improve our range of specialist disability programmes  
24 for people with complex disability related barriers to  
25 work. These proposals are based on inclusion. We want

1 customers who need longer term supportive employment to  
2 get more consistent quality support that helps them  
3 progress at work, wherever possible. We received over  
4 450 responses which were overwhelmingly positive, from  
5 individuals representative organisations, local  
6 authorities, educational establishments and employers.  
7 And as with Access to Work, there was a clear desire to  
8 see an expansion of these services. In light of this  
9 strong support, we announced in the Green Paper our  
10 intention to press ahead with these reforms. In  
11 summary, a responses to this consultation will be  
12 published later this year.

13 I cannot speak to you about support for disabled  
14 people without mentioning our hugely successful Pathways  
15 to Work programme. I'm proud of the positive  
16 impact pathways has been having on the employment  
17 prospects of disabled people, and the international  
18 acknowledgment that it's one of the best ways of getting  
19 disabled people back into work. Our offer of a huge  
20 expansion of back to work support, coupled with an  
21 obligation for the majority of new claimants to engage  
22 with personal advisers has been proven to work, and  
23 that's why we're investing £1.1 billion over the next  
24 3 years, so that as of April the service has been  
25 available to everyone receiving incapacity benefits in

1 Great Britain. The success of our back to work help has  
2 long been in no small part due to work in partnership  
3 with expert organisations. We're trying to extend the  
4 depth of this partnership working by trying out an  
5 innovative funding arrangement to underpin new, outcome  
6 based contracts with private and voluntary sector  
7 providers. We will reward providers for delivering  
8 sustained employment outcomes for long-term incapacity  
9 benefit claimants by personalised support. This  
10 provision and our ambition to go further, outlined in  
11 the Green Paper, will help us strive towards our  
12 ambition to reduce the numbers receiving incapacity  
13 benefit by 1 million.

14 But having said all of this, there also has to be  
15 a receptive environment where disability discrimination  
16 is unlawful and where employers have the confidence and  
17 breadth of vision to see the potential of employees who  
18 are disabled or who have manageable health conditions.  
19 We asked employers already committed to recruiting and  
20 retaining more disabled people, what more could be done  
21 to persuade other employers to build the same  
22 commitment? They gave us two important core messages:  
23 employers take more notice of the ideas of other  
24 employers and their support organisations than they do  
25 of Government and pressure groups, and we need to

1 support employers more effectively and engage them  
2 better in the design and delivery of processes that help  
3 disabled people to get or keep jobs. So we built  
4 a cohesive strategy to help larger employers do things  
5 better and to help meet the needs of small and medium  
6 sized employers. Firstly, we've asked key committed  
7 employers, disability focused employer groups, and other  
8 key stakeholders to help us establish an employer-led  
9 campaign to promote good corporate and delivery  
10 practices. Then, alongside this work, we've introduced  
11 key initiatives to help employers to do more. However,  
12 we know that there are not enough employers with this  
13 commitment and confidence, often new to the negative  
14 attitudes that still exist about the talent and skills  
15 disabled people have to offer. Let me emphasise that  
16 I'm certain the vast majority of employers don't  
17 deliberately discriminate against disabled people; they  
18 base their decisions on what they consider to be the  
19 best interests of their organisations. And as a result,  
20 their decisions are too often unnecessarily negative,  
21 influenced by their perception of a disabled person  
22 defined by a clinical diagnosis or disability. These  
23 perceptions are sometimes fuelled by myths and  
24 misunderstandings and sometimes amplified by unfortunate  
25 media coverage where too often we hear about the extreme

1           unrepresentative examples. Employability is our ongoing  
2           communications programme with employers, which aims to  
3           challenge these myths and misconceptions by talking to  
4           them in business terms about the wider talent pool they  
5           might be missing out on. My department has specifically  
6           led on developing local employment partnerships. These  
7           partnerships based on a simple deal between employer and  
8           Government, will open up sustainable job opportunities  
9           for disadvantaged claimants by providing pre-employment  
10          training, work trials, and guaranteed interviews. My  
11          department is also working with the Department for  
12          Innovations, Universities and Skills to help and ensure  
13          that personal and professional development continues in  
14          the workplace, the Train to Gain programme provides  
15          a comprehensive skill service to help employers make the  
16          most of the skills and capabilities of all of their  
17          workforce. And yes, the support needs of disabled  
18          people may be particular, but their place in the  
19          workforce is the same as any other person. I believe in  
20          a world where it is seen as natural that all jobs can be  
21          done by disabled people with appropriate support and  
22          adjustment, not the other way around, as it's been in  
23          the past. Finally, I would like to also talk about part  
24          of the Green Paper that's not received as much coverage  
as the proposals I've just discussed. Chapter five [of the Green

25  
Paper]

1 outlines our thinking on how we could introduce right to  
2 request control or disabled adults. In 2005 we  
3 published the White Paper "Improving the Life Chances of  
4 Disabled People". The report was a commitment by  
5 Government that by 2025, disabled people would be  
6 respected and included as equal members of society, with  
7 full opportunities to fulfill their potential. And our  
8 recently published Independent Living Strategy  
9 underlined this commitment and we're keen to build on it  
10 further, a right to request control does just that.

11 Disabled people know best how to maximise the  
12 effectiveness the funding streams they're entitled to,  
13 and during the summer will continue to consult on how  
14 best we can give greater choice and control to users.  
15 We want to empower disabled people by giving them  
16 a right to request control over the range of public  
17 funding they receive and allowing them the autonomy to  
18 desired how this money can be better spent to meet their  
19 individual needs.

20 I will be particularly interested in your thoughts  
21 about how this could work in practice and whether the  
22 Government needs to legislate to make this a reality.  
23 I believe we stand at a critical juncture on the road to  
24 equality. I've touched on today [that] it's inevitable that  
25 there will be some huge challenges and difficult

1 decisions ahead if we're going to reach are goal of an  
2 equal society, but I'm convinced that we now have  
3 a common language and objectives that will help us move  
4 towards our objective of equality by 2025. Debates like  
5 this tonight will be an important part of that process,  
6 and I thank you for your time. (applause).

7 LIZ SAYCE: Thank you very much for outlining so clearly the  
8 Government's policy, position and proposals in the Green  
9 Paper. I think Lord McKenzie can stay for a small  
10 number of questions is that right?

11 BILL MCKENZIE: Yeah.

12 LIZ SAYCE: So I've got Andrew -- I'm going to take several  
13 at a time. Then Nicholas and then, is it look, the  
14 gentlemen on that table there? Can I have a microphone  
15 come up to the front here? Can I ask if you're able to  
16 keep your questions fairly short, we'll be able to get  
17 more in. It's Andrew then Nicholas then Luke. Thanks.

18 MALE SPEAKER: [Andrew Lee, Director of People First] First of all my  
question is to you,

19 Lord McKenzie. My concern at the moment is at present,  
20 local authorities are pulling funding from south  
21 advocacy organisations, in towns and cities, ups and  
22 down the UK. This is where people with learning  
23 difficulties can become a volunteer, they go on to the  
24 management committee and then they may actually think  
25 about work within that organisation. My question is:

1           what can you do to make sure that local authorities  
2           actually take the funding of self advocacy  
3           organisations, make sure that work and valued lifestyle  
4           is ingrained into local authority thoughts as much as it  
5           is into central Government. What worried me was that in  
6           Liverpool they only have £1.6 million this year and they're  
7           prepared to actually pull the funding for the key  
8           learning disability group, Liverpool people first, just  
9           to save a little bit of money. And therefore  
10          are cutting off communication between people with  
11          learning difficulties in Liverpool and the local  
12          authority.

13   LIZ SAYCE: Thanks for that Andrew. We'll take two more and  
14          then invite Lord McKenzie to respond. It's Nicholas.

15   MALE SPEAKER: Nicholas Russell, Guide Dogs for the Blind  
16          Association. Government pledged to support the 2003  
17          World Health semi-resolution which has led to the  
18          development of the UK vision strategy. This landmark  
19          document sets out a compelling case with inclusion for  
20          partially sighted people including more access to the  
21          labour market. Lack of rehabilitation services is one  
22          of the factors that contributes to the unacceptable  
23          statistic that two out of three blind or partially  
24          sighted people of working age are unemployed. As  
25          spelt out recently in the Guide Dogs publication

1 independence and ... Partially sighted adults?

2 LIZ SAYCE: Thank you very much. Front row again.

3 MALE SPEAKER: Luke Hamill. My question is to Lord McKenzie.

4 Thank you for those very interesting and new ideas

5 I hadn't really thought of before. Can you shed

6 a little more light on the subject of the measures the

7 new assessment measures for severe disability to require

8 people to go back to work?

9 BILL MCKENZIE: Okay let me see if I can deal with those.

10 Andrew first talked about local authorities and their

11 withdrawal of the funding for support for people with

12 learning disabilities in particular. Obviously, local

13 authorities have discretion over how they deal with

14 their budgets. I would say that if you looked at the

15 aggregate about funding levels that local authorities

16 have had over the last 10 years I think [there has been] something like

17 39 per cent real time increase, but they do have

18 challenges undoubtedly, particularly with an ageing

19 population and pressure on care services in particular.

20 But we've been working very closely with the local

21 authorities, partnership is a key way of delivering on

22 our objectives, partnerships with local authorities,

23 partnerships with a range of organisations in the

24 voluntary sector, working through local area agreements,

25 through the city strategies, where there is the

1 opportunity for setting out specific targets and pooling  
2 of the funding at local level by all organisations who  
3 sign up to these agreements, and that's one way of  
4 dealing with that, and helping that but I recognise  
5 there are pressure on local authority budgets, but  
6 I believe that centrally Government has done its bit in  
7 supporting funding being available. I think the clear  
8 idea that we're only ever going to ever be able to  
9 deliver on our objectives by working in partnerships is  
10 actually the key to that, and local authorities have  
11 a key role to play. And of course at local level it's  
12 not just local authorities, it's a whole range of local  
13 and skills -- a whole range of other organisations who  
14 will be putting input into that process. Nicholas asked  
15 about support for people with visual impairment in  
16 employment. Again mentioned in my presentation, the  
17 funding in relation to Access to Work, which is to be  
18 doubled. I think that helps a significant number of  
19 people who are visually impaired into a (inaudible) good  
20 route which has proved to be successful. Luke asked  
21 about the new assessment process. This was put together  
22 in our last year's welfare reform, and the fundamental  
23 change in the approach is to actually focus on what  
24 people can do not on what they cannot do. The old  
25 assessment used to look at people's incapacity and then

1 when they looked at their incapacities they weren't  
2 capable of work, they were claiming benefit and higher  
3 rate when they were able to work for a bit longer and  
4 there was no effective support given to them to help  
5 them get back to work. We're recasting that; capability  
6 assessment is absolutely fundamental to the Government's  
7 current approach.

8 And it has a number of Green Papers. We're thinking  
9 the technical detail, I'm not sure I'm confident to  
10 outline in detail but those were put together on the  
11 basis of extensive consultation and I'm sure many people  
12 represented at this table today and others, to try to  
13 make sure it was clear and identified what people were  
14 capable of, and therefore to move on through Pathways  
15 and other programmes to help them realise that potential  
16 to get back into work. It's really been a disgrace that  
17 the incapacity benefit, that the numbers on incapacity  
18 benefits rose inexorably for two decades, that rise has  
19 been halted and turned around in recent years, but it  
20 was effectively designed originally to get people  
21 off the unemployment statistics so that they didn't  
22 count, but they consigned huge pool of talented people  
23 and aspirations, desires, to support their family, it  
24 wrote them off and did nothing for them and the  
25 fundamental part of the current vote is to reverse that,

1 to identify that people can do things and support and  
2 help them into work and to always working particularly.  
3 I think the point that Andrew made, it was about  
4 sometimes working with voluntary organisations, working  
5 locally can be a step forwards more formal employment  
6 and I think that's absolutely right as well.

7 LIZ SAYCE: Thank you much. Any more or do you have to go?

8 BILL MCKENZIE: I am okay for another couple of minutes.

9 LIZ SAYCE: Okay I'll take some from over this side.

10 Somebody indeed front here and then the gentleman with  
11 his hand up here, and then I think it my be Saghir there  
12 in the front and then we'll stop. I'm sorry to those  
13 people who have not been able to ask questions but we  
14 will also be feeding the whole of the debate through to  
15 the Government here afterwards and I think there are  
16 other people here from DWP here as well.

17 MALE SPEAKER: My name is Nick. I wanted to ask a question  
18 which I guess is focused on your Chapter Five [of the Green Paper]  
which is

19 the right to control, and you didn't mention charging  
20 for social care or the means testing of personal  
21 support, which I'd imagine the majority of unemployed  
22 disabled people need on a daily basis, not just to get  
23 to work, but to get out of bed and get into position to  
24 find a job in the first place. And it seems to me that  
25 is the missing link in the resourcing of this process of

1 getting people into work because although earned in  
2 comes now disregarded by local authorities when means  
3 testing for social care services, before that, means  
4 testing reduces people's income to in some support plus  
5 25 per cent, and at most in England. So it seems to me  
6 that people are trapped in poverty until they can get  
7 the support they need from a more fundamental stage  
8 before they can even consider going to work, because  
9 they actually can't afford the basic life and limb  
10 support.

11 LIZ SAYCE: There is a gentleman there, yes. If you're able  
12 to keep the question fairly brief it's helpful.

13 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you minister, Mike Hobday from Cancer  
14 Support. We're obviously interested in the 20,000  
15 people diagnosed with cancer each year and our  
16 experience I they have a very strong desire to return to  
17 work but what there is is an absence of specialist  
18 vocational rehabilitation support to enable them to keep  
19 their jobs or move into jobs. We've spoken to the  
20 different people involved in this area, cancer  
21 rehabilitation comes pretty low on everyone's areas of  
22 interest and priority. And the I'd be interested in  
23 your thought on how that might change.

24 LIZ SAYCE: Thanks. Finally Saghir [Alam].

25 MALE SPEAKER: Thanks, a member of the Disability Committee [of the  
Equality and Human Rights Commission].

1 My question is to the minister regarding disabled people  
2 with multiple identities, there are many people who are  
3 from ethnic communities who have language barriers and  
4 at the moment Green Paper doesn't address how you are  
5 going to reach those hard to reach groups who have  
6 multiple identities and who are actually living in  
7 poverty.

8 LIZ SAYCE: Thank you very much.

9 BILL MCKENZIE: Can I start with the rehabilitation support,  
10 very important to point out I think as part of the  
11 Government's health work and wellbeing strategy we've  
12 been looking at a whole range of issues focused on  
13 occupational support and vocational rehabilitation.

14 You'll be aware of [Dame] Carol Black's report, and one of the  
15 issues that she highlighted was the fragmented  
16 provision of this. We did set up a vocational  
17 rehabilitation task group to look at a range of things,  
18 certainly to look at barriers to better rehabilitation  
19 support offered by employers, what incentives might be  
20 needed, what disincentives there were in the system.  
21 And there was, together with the IAC, some research  
22 commissioned which was produced about a couple of months  
23 ago in a sense which fundamentally underlined the need  
24 to have more rehabilitation in the provision right  
25 across the best. I'm conscious that's a sort of general

1 response to quite a specific question but I'd be happy  
2 to drop you a line on the work that has been undertaken  
3 and where that currently stands. Perhaps a particularly  
4 important follow-up for that would be we've got to do  
5 our Government response to the Carol black report which  
6 should be taking place soon, we're always a little be  
7 wary of putting a precise deadline on it but hopefully  
8 the end of October, and I think that will flag up some  
9 of these issues as well.

10 Saghir talked about hard to reach groups of people  
11 who have multiple identities and multiple challenges. A  
12 very important point. I mean one that I recognise,  
13 I mean (inaudible) there are not many more diverse  
14 locations in our country than Luton. I think local  
15 authorities, local partnerships again, have a key role  
16 to play in making sure they have a good translation  
17 service and making sure there's provision for people to  
18 improve their accomplishment if English is part of it,  
19 but I think at the end it very much comes back to  
20 partnership work in that local level.

21 Finally, I think the question we struggled with it  
22 a very clear answer on because it's a little bit outside  
23 my direct knowledge about the issue of care and support  
24 by local authorities, quite apart from the support that  
25 needs to be given to people, that they deserve to help

1           them towards employment. I think it's right to say  
2           local authorities across the best have, I think they  
3           generally adopted a standard criteria and acknowledged  
4           that criteria has generally narrowed. There was  
5           a consultation document which my colleague Ivan Lewis  
6           was particularly involved in. I think perhaps I'd best  
7           send you the responses or a copy of our conclusions on  
8           all of that, because I cannot off the top of my head  
9           remember exactly where we are on that. And then we've  
10          got some officials in the audience if somebody could  
11          help me out on that, that would be appreciated, if  
12          somebody has anything they can -- if they want to add.

13 FEMALE SPEAKER: I think -- sorry, the only thing I'd add to  
14          that, also, given -- thank you. Can you hear me now?  
15          I think the one thing I would add to that is again it's  
16          not something I know a huge amount about but the a area  
17          of support which can be very important for people is  
18          disability living allowance and obviously the  
19          understanding there that that is both an in and out of  
20          work benefit so it can help sometimes bridge that gap  
21          a little bit.

22 LIZ SAYCE: Okay thanks very much. Just again, to thank the  
23          minister for coming at such short notice and wish you  
24          well in your next appointment in Luton. Thanks very  
25          much and we'll be putting up the results of this debate

1 on the website and communicating with you further about  
2 what comes out.  
3 BILL MCKENZIE: I'm sure you'll have a very interesting  
4 evening as well.

