

## **Engaging with disabled people**

The Minister for Disabled People, Jonathan Shaw, spent 21-25 September visiting disability organisations across Britain.

He said “Engagement with disabled people is vital if our policies and services are going to meet their needs. I am committed to an extensive programme of engagement, and it is important that as part of that, I reach as many people with different experiences in different parts of the country as possible.”

## **Right to Control**

The week started with a Right to Control consultation event hosted by Disability Cornwall in Newquay, where the Minister also met people using new sand chairs on Fistral Beach.

Visits to the Calvert Trust (an outdoor activity holiday centre), Foxes Academy (a training hotel and catering college for people with learning disabilities) and an overnight stay in the Promenade Hotel in Minehead (which provides accessible accommodation) reinforced the importance of accessible tourism for disabled people.

The Minister said, “Disabled people have as much right to tourism as non-disabled people, the right to independence and choice in their lives.”

## **Employment**

One of the main themes of the tour was employment, whether finding employment or staying in work.

The tour included visits to a volunteering project for disabled people from black and minority ethnic communities in Wrexham; a rural outreach programme in Llangollen run by MIND Cymru; organisations in Edinburgh providing employment support to people with autistic spectrum disorders and mental health conditions; a rehabilitation pilot project supporting people who become ill or disabled to stay in work; an organisation in Leeds employing people with learning disabilities; and an Open Day event in Ashington promoting high quality goods manufactured by Remploy to local businesses.

## **Access to Work**

Disabled university students and graduates in Cardiff discussed the transition from study to work and Jobcentre Plus’ Access to Work programme with the minister.

Sophie Dymant told the Minister, “To go to job interviews when you have a sight problem throws up a lot of problems,” but she said that the Access to Work fund had helped her to secure items needed for her job.

In Newcastle, the Minister spoke to people involved in shaping how the Right to Control would affect Access to Work. The Minister said, “[One participant] told me how upfront payments had made her life so much easier and kept her in her job – which reinforced why we are considering including Access to Work in the funding streams under Right to Control”.

## **Hate crime**

The Minister visited Blackpool Centre for Independent Living, which is delivering a project aimed at enabling disabled people to report incidents of hate crime in an environment where their experiences are understood.

The Minister said, “Government is aware that something needs to be done to increase the reporting, recording and prosecution of disability hate crime – and we recently launched our cross-Government Hate Crime Action Plan. If we are to address these issues we will need innovative projects like this, and I look forward to hearing how this project progresses.”

## **After the visits**

The minister felt he had gained further insight into the concerns of disabled people following the visits.

He said “I appreciate the time people took to talk to me about their experiences and am grateful to the organisations who showed me their work – we need people’s input to make sure we continue working in the right direction towards equality by 2025.

“We have a full programme of work across government towards that goal, and this week’s visits have highlighted the extent of positive work happening across the country. It is important to hear what is working, but it is even more important to hear what could be improved. These visits have been vital to highlight areas where we need to redouble our efforts.”