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# **Living with disability: a message from disabled parents**

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The recently published Green Paper on welfare reform outlines the Government's strategy to move one million disabled people off incapacity benefits within a decade and increase significantly the number of disabled people in paid employment.<sup>1</sup> There are currently just over two million disabled parents in the UK. Around half of these (one million) are also workless, accounting for one in three out-of-work disabled adults.<sup>2</sup> Addressing the particular barriers disabled parents face to employment is crucial if the Government is to meet this ambitious target.

This chapter considers welfare reform from the perspective of disabled adults with parenting responsibilities. The first section provides a brief overview of government policy on disabled parents and child poverty. The second part draws directly on the personal experiences and viewpoints of a small number of disabled parents interviewed for this work. It outlines the impact that disability has on parents' and children's lives; records parents' attitudes to, and experiences of, paid employment; questions the accessibility and adequacy of disability benefits, including incapacity benefit (IB); and considers the availability and appropriateness of services. It examines whether the proposals outlined in the Green Paper are likely to assist more disabled parents into work, and whether they will help or hinder the Government's policy on reducing child poverty. It concludes with a number of key messages from disabled parents for the Government.

Parents in this study experienced a range of disabilities, including physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health problems. A number of parents expressed discomfort with the term 'disabled', which possibly reflects a tendency to view the term as a medical rather than a

social condition. As one parent observed, 'I know I am disabled, but I don't term myself disabled unless somebody makes me disabled...' A distinction should be drawn between impairments and health conditions, and 'disability' (which arises out of society's failure to respond to the needs of people with impairments). Many disabled parents feel positive about their qualifications, experiences and skills, and emphasise that they are disabled by discrimination rather than their physical or mental impairment. In this chapter, for reasons of clarity, all participating parents are referred to as 'disabled parents'.

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## Introduction

The Government accepts that children with sick or disabled parents are vulnerable to living in poverty, that disabled parents are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market, and that children with disabled parents face a disproportionate risk of living in poverty.<sup>3</sup> The *Child Poverty Review*, published as part of Spending Review 2004, reports that:

Parenting support is especially important for poor parents in vulnerable groups such as disabled parents, who face a particular risk of being in poverty. Over two million children live in families with one or more disabled adults. These children have an above average risk of living in low-income households.<sup>4</sup>

*Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* records that:

Among workless households with children, the majority have at least one disabled parent: children are more likely to experience poverty if there are disabled adults in the family.<sup>5</sup>

The recently published *Households Below Average Income* data indicates that, after housing costs have been accounted for, 24 per cent of the 3.4 million poor children in Great Britain (around 816,000) lived with one or more disabled adult in 2004/05. The risk of income poverty for this group was 40 per cent (against an average risk for all children of 27 per cent).<sup>6</sup>

The Government believes that 'helping parents into work is the most sustainable way to tackle child poverty and give children better opportunities to succeed in later life.'<sup>7</sup> However, the Department for Work

and Pensions (DWP) accepts that accessing employment is particularly difficult for disabled parents. In November 2003, the DWP and the Treasury organised a high-level seminar, which considered the many barriers disabled parents face to the labour market, including low qualifications, poor service provision (for example, childcare and social services for personal assistance), additional disability-related costs and problems with transport.<sup>8</sup> The DWP highlighted the fact that disabled lone parents experience additional problems.<sup>9</sup>

A paper circulated at the seminar concluded that:

Whilst the Government recognises and has put in place strategies to raise the employment rate of disabled people, reduce the number of children in workless households and reduce child poverty, strategies to help disabled people return to work do not make specific provision for those who are also parents; nor do strategies for lone and couple parents make specific provision for those who are disabled.<sup>10</sup>

The Government accepts that it is difficult to discuss employment strategies for disabled people without considering support services. However, disabled parents are particularly disadvantaged in this respect.

In April 2000 the Social Services Inspectorate published *A Jigsaw of Services: inspection of services to support disabled adults in their parenting role*, which highlighted a lack of flexible services to support disabled people undertake their parenting role. Although a task force was set up by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation with the support of the Department of Health to identify how best to support disabled adults in their parenting role<sup>11</sup> and a recent report published by the Department of Health<sup>12</sup> seeks to resolve these sorts of problems, the disabled parents interviewed reported that their parenting responsibilities are routinely ignored by services and have not been taken into consideration in the Green Paper.

*Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* emphasises that 'recognising the particular needs and circumstances of disabled parents will be vital to the achievement of policy objectives of increasing employment rates and tackling child poverty'<sup>13</sup> and yet the Green Paper does not engage with the needs of disabled parents. Clearly, if the Government wishes to succeed in its two very ambitious targets – drawing one million disabled people off incapacity benefits, and halving child poverty by 2010 – policy initiatives must consider the needs of disabled parents.

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## **The case studies**

Although the parents who participated in this small study are by no means representative, they illustrate the fact that disabled parents span many groups that are at risk of living in poverty. Parents interviewed include couples, lone parents, parents with disabled children, parents with additional caring responsibilities, parents with larger families and parents from black and minority ethnic groups. Some parents experienced additional disadvantages, such as domestic violence, teenage pregnancy and homelessness. The parents cover a wide age range.

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### **The families**

The names of all parents and children have been changed.

**Ginny** is a disabled parent whose husband is in full-time employment. Although Ginny worked for nearly 25 years, she gave up work when a deteriorating medical condition and parenting two very young children had a negative impact on both her long-term health and the quality of her parenting. She has not returned to paid employment because loss of benefit would need to be offset by full-time employment, which she is no longer physically able to sustain. Ginny is currently organising a peer support group of disabled parents in her local authority area on a voluntary basis.

**Louise** is a disabled parent whose husband is in full-time employment. Louise has always worked, most recently in a demanding professional capacity for a large government agency. Six months ago Louise developed a secondary impairment, which necessitated a number of adaptations at work. Managing a full-time job without adequate support alongside parenting proved to be too much and Louise was forced to give up her job. She is currently looking for work, but she fears that if she does succeed in getting a job it will be well below her skill levels. Louise has two daughters.

**Liz and Bill** are both disabled. They live with their 10-year-old daughter, Alexandra. **Liz** previously worked as a carer and was hoping to train as a nurse, but her health problems mean that she is unable to undertake any kind of physical work. She is currently studying IT, which she hopes will enable her to do some voluntary work. **Bill** was a skilled fitter before being made redundant some years ago. After working for a short time as a kitchen porter, he moved onto IB after a major work-related back injury. Bill was unable to maintain the mortgage payments and the family lost their home. Bill cares for Liz, his elderly mother and his daughter. Although high levels of stress have generated additional health problems, Bill is hoping to

retrain and to access employment with the help of his disability personal adviser.

**Susie** is a lone parent with mental health problems. She worked full time for 20 years, during which time she was regularly admitted to psychiatric hospitals. Her relationship broke down after her first hospital admission and Susie was unable to combine working and parenting her two-year-old daughter, Anna, who was looked after by her grandmother. Susie gave up work three years ago after another hospital admission. Her daughter now lives with her. Susie runs a service user group.

**Anna**, Susie's 17-year-old daughter is studying for her A levels. Anna has lived with her grandmother since she was two and saw her parents – who are separated – at the weekends. Anna moved in with Susie after she gave up full-time employment three years ago.

**Rose** is severely disabled and is a wheelchair user. She lives with her husband, John, and they have four children. Her son, Steven, has leukaemia and has been in and out of hospital for treatment for two years. John gave up full-time employment two years ago so that he could stay with Steven in hospital and the family now live on benefits.

**Amrit** is a 23-year-old South East Asian lone parent with mental health problems who has a three-year-old daughter. Although Amrit did well at school, her education was disrupted by mental health and family problems. Although she is keen to complete her academic training, regular hospital admissions and problems with housing have rendered it difficult for her to fulfill her academic potential. Amrit is finding it difficult to balance being a full-time mother with studying and/or working.

**Sally** is a 22-year-old lone parent with mental health problems. She has a three-year-old daughter. She moved out of her family home when she was 15. Although she started a university degree, she had to give up because of lack of support for her as a parent. Sally would like to complete her studies and access employment in due course, but for the moment she wants to care for her daughter.

**Linda** is a lone parent who has chronic back problems that necessitated spinal surgery some years ago. She has two grown up children and an 11-year-old daughter. Linda is currently trying to access employment with the support of her personal adviser at the Jobcentre Plus. Although Linda is very keen to work, she fears that her age (44) and lack of qualifications will render this difficult.

Support group for parents with learning disabilities. We visited a small group of parents with learning disabilities. **Maria** and her husband **William** have four children, one of whom is severely disabled and is a wheelchair

user. **Teresa** has mild learning disabilities. Her son is at a special school and her grown-up daughter has Asperger's Syndrome. **Denise**, whose partner has severe mental health problems, has three children, one of whom is disabled. We have included some comments from the facilitator of the group, **Gill**.

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## **Employment**

Disabled parents are well aware that the onset of ill-health or a disability is not only associated with a drop in income, but can generate social exclusion. Many would like to do paid work in addition to their role as parents caring for children, and recognise that it can bring significant financial and psychological benefits – including a sense of self-worth and social inclusion. Liz reports she is often confined to the house, and she feels very isolated:

'...it really gets me down. When you've gone from being completely active to suddenly losing so much, it tends to make you feel like you're not whole... I'm sitting here on my own 90 per cent of the time – the only people I see are Bill and Alexandra...'

However, parents emphasise that the advantages of employment depend on the sort of work that is both available and possible, and the support that has been put in place. They also point out that there is more to life than paid employment. Susie observes:

'Yes, work can be incredibly therapeutic, but there need to be things in place to help people, and quality of life shouldn't just be about you've got a job so you're entitled to a quality of life, quality of life should be for everybody...'

Parents highlight the complexity of balancing work and being a parent. Ginny comments:

'Work is good for you, depending what the work is...but if you have a family you still have to attend to children's needs and recover energies at the end of the day...'

Rose agrees:

'Work is good, if it's a job you like doing and it's reasonably well paid and it's not too stressful and it's not taking its toll on your health...and you've got support for your children.'

Families feel that the Government and personal advisers need to bear family responsibilities in mind when encouraging disabled people to access employment. As Rose points out:

'The Government need to look at the whole thing, the circumstances of family life, illness, what the Government can provide, what caring support is available...'

Ill-considered references to people 'languishing on benefits'<sup>14</sup> and 'benefits dependency'<sup>15</sup> and a sometimes vitriolic press campaign, have had an impact on parents' perceptions of the Government's welfare-to-work strategy. Families question whether the Government is motivated by a desire to improve the lives of disabled people or to save money. Amrit observes:

'All they're interested in is targets. They don't care about what sort of a dead-end job they put you into... You see these posters announcing 'We've got x amounts of people into employment' and you think 'Whoa', but how many of them left a job a day later?... They say 'We'll stay with you for two months', but what happens when you relapse?'

## **Employment services**

Although families want more support to help them access employment, they are concerned that this is not always relevant or appropriate, and rarely leads to paid work. Disabled parents who are endlessly job searching become demoralised when they are repeatedly turned down for job interviews. Linda comments:

'When I think of the jobs I've written after and not had replies it's so disheartening...'

Some families are sceptical about new initiatives to help them access employment. Ginny reports:

'...various [private agencies funded by the DWP] have contacted me and said 'We're trying to get disabled people into employment and we can offer you rehabilitation and courses on computing'...I'm thinking 'What makes you the expert? I don't need a nurse, I need a job...' My own reaction to that is if you want me to work, offer me a job in your office doing this for other people who don't know how to find a job... If you don't have the skills to find a job, the chances are the jobs aren't there...'

Families welcome the support of their personal adviser. Bill observes that his personal adviser at Jobcentre Plus 'was a brilliant bloke, he was disabled himself...' However, they emphasise that personal advisers cannot force employers to give them a suitable job. Linda comments:

'My PA is very, very good and very helpful... She rings me up and tells me about what jobs there are, but [employers] don't want me because I don't have [the right qualifications].'

A number of parents with learning disabilities express frustration with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus. William comments '...they keep getting new people and there's no passing on of the information', Maria observes that people 'make assumptions' and Teresa reports that 'they have no respect, no respect. They don't listen to you, they say 'Oh she's got learning difficulties...''

Families feel frustrated that Jobcentre Plus sends them on endless courses, but does not find them jobs. Although Linda was very happy with a 'return-to-work' course she did at her local college that included computer skills, she became disheartened when it did not result in employment. 'It was a great course...if only you could get a job at the end...'

A number of parents with learning disabilities also question the relevance of the courses they are sent on. Teresa comments that when she was on jobseeker's allowance, she was told she had to go on a course. She asked if she could go on a catering course, but said that she did not mind what she did provided it was not computing. She was sent on a computing course.

## **Work and health**

Official discussion has focused on the benefits that appropriate paid work – and an increase in income – may bring to disabled adults. However it is

not this simple. Although most parents would like to work, they have concerns about the impact that balancing employment alongside their health and parental responsibilities could have on their health.

On the one hand, Susie acknowledges that being at home on her own would have been extremely difficult ‘...I most probably would have cracked up again because if you’re on your own 24/7...’ On the other hand, she reports that struggling to work full time for 20 years generated a number of breakdowns and hospital admissions. She feels that her mental health problems exacerbated difficulties working, and that working compounded her mental health problems:

‘I was a person who would set these standards to show to yourself and everybody else that your illness doesn’t dominate you and make you less of a worker...’

Susie’s daughter, Anna, felt that access to a part-time, less stressful job would have mitigated the negative impact working had on her mother’s health:

‘I didn’t want her at home all the time because I know she likes to be independent [but] if she got a job where the workload was less, then maybe she would be less stressed...’

Although part-time work is a welcome option, disabled parents emphasise that working fewer hours can still generate exhaustion and stress levels more usually associated with full-time employment. Louise comments:

‘I really think we should be either paid the same amount to do fewer hours, or some adjustment, because it is exhausting... It’s hard to get through your work day for many of us, let alone coming back and taking responsibility for the family.’

Although Amrit is keen to access paid employment, she is worried about the impact it might have on her mental health:

‘At Jobcentre Plus they draw up this chart saying you’ll be £120 a week better off – but is it likely to make me happier or is it likely to be a trigger [of mental health problems] for me – like becoming homeless was a trigger?... They seem to think if you’re in a job you’ll stay well. They say ‘When you work you probably don’t fall ill’ – but I’m going to fall ill because it’s biologi-

cal. I've been to college, I've still fallen ill. I've worked, I've still fallen ill – getting £3,000 saved in my bank account isn't going to help when I fall ill.'

Louise highlights the difficulties of retaining employment when she developed a secondary impairment eight months ago, even though she worked for a large government agency. Although she was keen to retain her skilled and demanding professional job, she found handling new – and often faulty – special equipment extremely stressful:

'I struggled with so many new things – voice activated software, a headset for the phone...and then it didn't work, and I had to have a PA [personal assistant] as well as a driver, and I was dealing with an awful lot of pain, and I just couldn't cope with all of it any more.'

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## **Barriers to employment**

### **Stigma and discrimination**

Although families welcome any support that will enable them to make a choice about employment, in the light of the discrimination disabled people experience on a daily basis, the parents interviewed thought it was unfair and unjust to pressurise them to access work. Until stigma and discrimination are eliminated within society as a whole, our interviewees do not hold out much hope of employers' attitudes changing.

Rose observes:

'There's legislation came out where you have to have access for disabled people, but you go up to the bank and I can't get in...it's got no ramp... [and at the supermarket] you have to fight for shopping trolleys...half an hour later we were still waiting for a porter to take it to the car...'

Lack of understanding about mental illness is viewed as a major problem. Susie comments:

'[My employers] never really understood my illness...when I've gone back each time after a bleak time of illness I thought that I needed more support than than at any time, and they didn't understand quite how to do that... It was like 'Susie's back and away we go'. I think what I would have liked is

for somebody, my manager, to say 'Look, you've been really poorly, can you tell me something about how you feel, about what your illness is, and would you tell me something about what we could do to help you, would you like to pace your work differently or try and do something different, do you need things that are not going to be so stressful for you?' But it wasn't like that... so I would overcompensate then by pushing myself to hitting a top standard of achievement all the time – but that's a manic thing – that goes with the territory...'

Anna has strong – and informed – views about the lack of understanding displayed by her mother's employers:

'My mum's employers didn't support her or anything. Unless you walk in the shoes of the person, or walk in the shoes of somebody who is close to the person, you never really understand. I think the only thing you can do is make employers more aware of the fact that people with mental illness need support, but at the same time they shouldn't just view people with mental illness as people who aren't capable. I think my mum's very capable when she's well, but she doesn't need to get to the point where she's unwell...'

Given the general lack of awareness of mental health issues displayed by Anna's teachers and the often prejudiced approach adopted by her friends, she does not think that discrimination is likely to be eliminated in the near future:

'I've never once heard anything about mental illness be mentioned at school ever. It's just not talked about...'

Parents with learning disabilities experience high levels of discrimination and report that they are routinely overlooked when it comes to interviews for suitable jobs – 'they always give it to the next person.' On the few occasions they do get work, families report that they are sent to the lowest paid jobs, which are often not in their own areas.

Teresa reports that her daughter, who has Asperger's Syndrome, has also encountered problems accessing employment, although she has a degree, is proficient with computers and has attended endless interviews. When she lowered her sights and applied for a job shelf-filling at a local shop she was turned down on the grounds that they were 'cutting back on staff'. Parents comment that when it comes to giving them a job 'most places are cutting back.'

Louise feels that her (public sector) employer could have done much more to help her keep her job:

‘The workload remained the same...they should have made more effort to re-deploy me...’

She reports that her over-worked colleagues displayed an understandable, but shocking, lack of awareness of her problems:

‘I felt my colleague at the office couldn’t understand...and these are highly educated people who are aware of these issues, they work with disabled people and older people... If only I could do it from home or work three days a week...’

Linda discusses the frustration of continuously applying for jobs and getting turned down or being left in limbo on ‘reserve lists’. She reports:

‘They have a national scheme to employ disabled people, but it doesn’t seem to work... I had an interview with the tax office...they sent me to occupational health to see what I would be needing, but I’m still on the reserve list...’

Disabled parents – at least 50 per cent of whom are women – may not be able to undertake the sort of physically demanding part-time work that is available to non-disabled women. This renders it even more difficult to access jobs. Ginny, a disabled parent who runs a service user group, points out:

‘Young mums could work at Tesco filling shelves, but this is not a suitable job for many disabled people. There needs to be differentiation...’

Linda comments:

‘If I could, I would have gone into a factory or got a job waitressing, but I couldn’t do it physically...’

Even when disabled people do get as far as an interview, they report that they are at a disadvantage if they have been out of employment for many years. When Linda was interviewed for a job with the tax office she observes:

'It was particularly stressful and hard...and some of the things they asked me – examples of problem solving... Not being in a workplace for a long time I had to think of other examples...'

Public attitudes can limit the sort of work a disabled adult can undertake. Amrit has self-harmed since she was a teenager. She comments:

'I've done work here and there, but it's difficult... for example, people freak out with my arms because I have horrendous scars – so Top Shop aren't going to say 'Come and work for us'... I try looking at it from their perspective – I say 'I'm well most of the time' [but] they're thinking, 'You're going to need that time off.' I could work for the first few weeks of a bad episode, or the last few weeks, but I need three, four or five weeks off during the really bad phases...'

Families report that support that has been put in place by the Government to help disabled people access employment can feel stigmatising. Amrit comments:

'Jobcentres have mental health advisers or lone parent advisers, or disability advisers – you have to choose which one you are... There's MENCAP saying 'Labels are for tins not for people' and there you have jobcentres saying 'mental health adviser', and you're standing in front of this sign, in front of other people...'

## **Skills, qualifications and training**

As discussed in Chapter 1, disabled people are often likely to work well below their level of skills because they may face discrimination irrespective of their level of educational achievement. Such discrimination may occur because of the inflexibility of most employment structures and working environments, and because people may be unable to cope with the stress levels and long-hour culture often associated with professional employment opportunities. Louise comments:

'I'm desperate to get back to work, I know I have so much to offer. I have very specific and unusual skills and experience and I can't use them...the more professional you've been the harder it is – my skills are very particular [and] I couldn't work five days...'

Although she is willing to take on work at a lower level than she is used to, Louise is beginning to lose heart:

‘The longer it goes on my confidence is sapping so fast. I know the rate of change, a new initiative, a document to absorb – and I feel I’m already out of date...’

Research also indicates that people who are disabled, and people who live in poverty, are less likely to get the qualifications they need to access well-remunerated employment.<sup>16</sup> The Government recognises that low skills and qualifications pose a barrier to employment, and has set up a number of training courses for disabled people. However, as discussed above, parents are not convinced that they will help. In a world in which qualifications are ever more important, disabled people may feel discriminated against because of interrupted schooling or difficulties gaining academic qualifications. Linda, who is 44, is frustrated by employers’ obsession with qualifications: ‘I’ve got the experience, but all they want is qualifications...’

Mental health problems during childhood and adolescence often disrupt studying and training. Susie reports:

‘I had always been erratic at school, being a manic depressive you’re like that, but it’s hard to say whether it was an illness or that’s the way it was. I never thought I had real problems until I was about 15, 16... I just thought it was my age, until it started going on and on... I did quite badly in my GCSEs...’

Combining training and parental responsibilities is difficult. Sally comments:

‘...doing a full-time degree and having a little boy was too much. I was living on campus. It was just too much to try and be a student and be a mum at the same time... I found myself turning into a monster. You either do one thing really well or you do two things badly...’

Amrit did not complete her academic training because of her mental health problems. She comments:

‘My dream job is teaching, if I get my degree by the time I’m 30...but I don’t know whether I’ll be able to... As long as I remain well – but if they can’t control my illness with medication I don’t think I’ll be able to do it.’

Some parents fear that they will be pushed into inappropriate jobs, irrespective of their skills or qualifications. Bill, who worked as a kitchen porter after being made redundant is hoping to retrain when his health improves:

'I've been used to doing engineering work – I'm not cut out to be a kitchen porter...'

Liz comments:

'I was always hoping to go back to work. As soon as the children were old enough to go to school, I went into the caring professions. I wanted to be an RGN [nurse]. I went on a day release course, and wanted to go on and train on a full-time basis...but I got my diagnosis that January...'

Constant rejections by prospective employers are demoralising and demeaning. Linda comments:

'I've been looking for work for ages, for over a year. It doesn't sound that long, but it seems like ages... It's demoralising. You get to the point you don't want to bother, you get doors shut in your face all the time. I'm an intelligent person, I've got a lot to offer. I wish they would look beyond the need for qualifications...'

## **Administrative barriers**

### **Benefit and support services**

The erratic and complex nature of the benefit system continues to pose major barriers to employment, as Rose points out:

'It takes a long time to get benefits put into place, and get to know what you're entitled to...say for example, it takes six to eight weeks to get benefits like income support and housing benefit... It was absolutely appalling when John came off work [to care for Steven]...it makes you think twice, it makes everybody think twice... When Steven went back into hospital I said to John 'Thank God you didn't go back to work because we would have had to been in the same situation again'

For parents with learning disabilities, the complexity of the benefits system undermines their confidence about applying for short-term jobs. Although a nine-month job that was suitable for someone with learning difficulties had come up the previous year, members of the group were worried about accessing benefits when the job came to an end: 'It's too much stress.' 'It makes you think.' 'At least benefits is safe money'.

Sick or disabled parents, who have had to fight for support at home, question whether appropriate support will be provided in the workplace. Rose comments:

'It's hard enough getting care in the home, how are they going to get care in the workplace?... If it's anything like my son trying to get statemented...'

The Access to Work scheme is designed to help employers with some of the costs of adapting workplaces to meet the needs of disabled workers. Although this scheme is clearly crucial, families report ongoing problems with its implementation. However, Louise reports that there is no financial support for pain or when people have to cut down from full-time to part-time work because of an impairment or disability. Her attempts to find a new job have been rendered difficult by cut-backs in the organisation that usually provides her with transport and which is funded by Access to Work. Although she is keen to attend an interview for a job, even though it is below her skill level, she does not know if she will be able to get there:

'The taxi fare is £100... If Access to Work don't provide it, the likelihood of local authority picking up the tab is inconceivable... I've had a bad time with Access to Work throughout – endless endless fights... I call it 'Access to Stress, or Access to Nothing'... Either they have it and fund it properly or they stop pretending...'

Disabled parents emphasise that their ability to work is directly linked with the provision of appropriate childcare – and not just during the day. Ginny comments:

'If you are disabled and you have a family, you still have to attend to the children's needs and recover your energies, and you're likely to be knackered at the end of the day...'

## Employment and family life

Balancing employment alongside caring for children is difficult for all parents, but it is more demanding for sick or disabled parents. Although many disabled parents would welcome the opportunity to undertake some form of paid employment, it is problematic balancing employment alongside their caring responsibilities and health conditions. They fear that the additional stress could damage their health, undermine their ability to parent their children and put a strain on relationships.

A number of the parents interviewed are lone parents. They worry about their ability to care for their child and work. Amrit, who joined an employment agency which helps disabled people to access employment, explains:

'My criteria was so tight... I said I need a job within school hours... I'll be using public transport – I can't drive... I need to drop my daughter off at school and then get to wherever the job is. I'm not going to be there until 9.30 and I have to pick her up at 3.30 and I ask 'What about holidays and half-terms?' They say 'Have you got friends? Is there nobody to else to look after her for you?' But I'm a 'single being' – I don't have any family support, I'm completely on my own... My daughter goes to an inner-city school. I'm not happy about leaving her there for after-school clubs until 6.30 in the evening. Maybe if I lived in a nice area...'

Disabled lone parents who do work report that it impacts on their ability to parent. Susie says:

'I was always exhausted. I hadn't got the energy to work and be a parent, it was either/or, and I just thought I'm working. I'm making money. I'm paying my way – I thought one day Anna would be back with me...the guilt goes on for years and years and years, it's almost as destructive as having a mental illness... Home life impacts on your work and work impacts on your home life, it's a whole life...but there's no quality of life, there's no enjoying yourself...very, very stressful... Upon reflection, I think it would have been better to say 'Look, I've been really ill, I've had a breakdown, Anna is a priority...'

Lack of support with additional caring responsibilities also has an impact on the employment opportunities for non-disabled partners. Lily's husband, John, had to give up his job when their son Steven got leukaemia and was admitted to hospital. Rose, a wheelchair user, is unable to care

for Steven when he is in hospital because of problems with access. She also has to care for her three older children. She comments:

'My husband is not disabled. He's able bodied and he's been employed since he was 16. However, he had to take time off to care for Steven, and he couldn't go back to work with Steven going to hospital every week... John's boss said you can come back to work, but they weren't happy for him to take time off to take Steven to hospital, me to hospital... Fair enough, let him go into work, but they have to provide me with carers and somebody to take Steven to hospital...'

Disabled parents who are primary carers (often, although not always, mothers) consider that they are at a greater disadvantage. Ginny observes:

'If a disabled person did not actually have to do practical childcare in the family they would have a higher chance of being able to promote their abilities. For example, I can write a letter, I can type, if I didn't have to also pace myself so that I could look after the children when they come back from school and do all the other things, I could go to work and write letters somewhere else... if I could depend on somebody to look after the children in the evening I would be able to do that job.'

### **The impact of employment on children**

The Government emphasises that paid employment is in the best interest of children because it reduces levels of poverty. However, although many of the parents to whom we spoke would like to have the option of working, and would welcome additional income, they are worried that accessing paid employment might increase stress levels for both them and their children. Ginny does not think children's lives will be improved 'by forcing people into work' if the conditions of paid employment are not sufficiently flexible to enable parents with limited energy and other physical/mental constraints to balance work alongside their parental responsibilities.

Anna is delighted that her mother has given up full-time employment and that she can now live with her:

'I don't think that my mum should have gone on working as long as she did. I think that as soon as she felt that things were too much, she should have given up her job because although it would have meant that I wouldn't have got so

much because she would have had less money, I would have rather have seen her happy than see her so down... the stress and strain showed...'

## The cost of employment

Disabled people incur additional costs that are directly related to impairment – for example, for extra heating, laundry and clothing, or special equipment. Furthermore, disabled people have to pay for personal support, goods and services, and help with tasks that non-disabled people can do for themselves.<sup>17</sup> Disabled parents emphasise that going to work generates additional disability-related costs for them as individuals, as well as for employers, and fear that a combination of being in low-paid work, working shorter hours and incurring additional costs might leave them worse off in work.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that moving into employment sometimes triggers a reassessment of disability living allowance (DLA), which is designed to help with the extra costs of disability. However, disabled parents point out that their care and mobility needs may actually go up when they move into paid employment. Ginny observes:

'You need the DLA mobility component to get you to work – without DLA or its equivalent I wouldn't have got into work in the first place...'

Low-paid work may leave disabled parents worse off because they have less time and energy to manage on an inadequate budget. Ginny comments:

'Disabled parents who are not in work can save money by having time, but you can't save money if you're at work on a low salary – particularly if you're disabled. Your choice of shop is restricted by how far you can go and your energy capacity. You may have to go to a closer shop that's more expensive if you're at work. Do you have to pay for somebody else to do something if you haven't got the energy to do it? Disabled people don't have the capacity to recover energy quickly... This is why there are so many disabled people out of work – the costs of it simply cannot be sustained with the salary that people are earning...'

There are other costs involved. As Sally comments:

'...if you're sacrificing time spent with your very young child you need some compensations – but they're not necessarily better off... Because the work isn't skilled work, you're not gaining anything but money, but if it's not more money...'

The situation does not necessarily get better when children grow older. Although Ginny's daughter is at university and her younger son will be going to university next year, there are still problems with working:

'I have been offered a part-time job, but the additional income will be negligible when additional tax payments, loss of SDA [severe disablement allowance], and the increased loss of grant and tuition fee remissions are taken into account. I would have to take a full-time, well-paid job to make a positive impact on our finances, and I just don't have the stamina to cope with that type of load. I'd be off sick within a fortnight with exhaustion... There comes a point at which pacing oneself becomes more important than money, because it keeps people from complete collapse and out of hospital.'

Louise comments:

'The costs go up if you're disabled, but they're higher if you're working. You either need additional income or additional help... If you're so tired at the end of the day you're going to rely more and more on electricity and machines [such as dishwashers, washing machines, micro-waves etc]...'

Parents point out that the stress of working can generate extra costs to medical services. Anna comments:

'...if [my mum] hadn't had so much pressure she wouldn't have been as ill as she was... The times she went into hospital were the times the work stress was the worst, so if she hadn't had so much work stress I don't think she would have had so many times when she had to go into hospital.'

Rose emphasises that disabled people are often carers and that if they move into employment, 'it's going to cost the Government more because they're going to have to care for the [disabled children or disabled adults] they look after...'

## Caring responsibilities

Disabled parents sometimes have additional caring responsibilities over and above being a parent. Although statistics are thin on the ground (in *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* the Government reports that 'Some families will include disabled parents and disabled children although there is little specific data on this group')<sup>18</sup> a number of disabled parents report that they care for both sick or disabled adults and/or sick or disabled children, and that this impacts on their ability to undertake employment.

Rose, whose youngest child Steven has leukaemia, comments:

'If I got a job, well and good, but I cannot work because I have no support from the Government to provide care for my child because he doesn't fit in to any category... If we are to go out to work – they will have to pay somebody to come and look after my child...'

Susie, a lone parent, helped care for her terminally ill mother for some years. After her mother died, her father became ill and she had to care for him, but she reports that her caring responsibilities were never taken into consideration:

'If I was in crisis and needed to see the psychiatrist and get my pills, but nobody ever said 'Do you need support as a family, do you need somebody to help you do some of the caring, we know you're working?'...nobody ever asked that obvious question.'

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## Benefits

Given high levels of poverty among disabled people and the difficulties accessing paid employment, it is imperative that the benefit system is adequate. However, although the Government argues that it is committed to providing financial support for people who cannot work, the families we spoke to highlight a number of problems with the social security system.

## **Adequacy**

The Government argues that incapacity benefit (IB) is just one part of a package of financial support for disabled people. This also includes DLA, which is intended to cover additional disability-related costs and can trigger disability premiums within income support and tax credits. Disability and carer organisations have long argued that extra-cost disability benefits do not cover the additional financial needs of disabled people and their carers. Furthermore, DLA does not take the additional costs of being disabled and being a parent into consideration – for example, the need for additional cleaning, transport, convenience foods and social excursions.<sup>19</sup>

## **Information**

Accessing DLA is extremely difficult and take-up of DLA is low.<sup>20</sup> Families find it difficult accessing information about benefits. Rose observes:

‘If you go the benefit office and say ‘I’m disabled’, they’re not going to tell you basically what you’re entitled to because half of them don’t know...’

Susie comments:

‘I didn’t know how I would be if I gave up work. You don’t know financially what the situation is. Nobody said to me ‘You know, if you want to actually focus on being a parent there are things that can help you. There are benefits that enable you to have your child with you...’

Low take-up of disability benefits is viewed as an important issue. Linda observes:

‘There’s so much money that isn’t being claimed – what are they doing to make sure that people are getting it? When you think of all the information about the pension credit, on the telly and in the papers, they don’t do that for DLA...’

## **Incapacity benefit**

Although the Government is concerned about the costs of IB, recipients report that moving from employment onto IB (which in April 2006 ranged from £59.20 to £78.50) results in a traumatic drop in income. Bill explains:

‘We were on a very good wage before, and you tend to set your stall out to that level – but then you lose your house and you lose everything...’

Susie reports that moving out of work and onto IB was financially very difficult:

‘I was on £20,000 a year and then I was on £3,500 a year... And every year you get a little bit more benefit money, but everything else goes up much more extremely – bills go up, everything goes up, so the benefit you get doesn’t cover everything that’s gone up, so you’re a little bit worse off every year.’

Living on benefits is a constant struggle. Rose comments bitterly:

‘[The public] feel that these people who’ve been claiming benefits for a long time are getting a lot of money, but you don’t get anything... We don’t like to sponge off the Government. We feel guilty, but we haven’t got a choice...’

## **Administration**

Applying for benefits is stressful, difficult and often demeaning. A complex and impenetrable system means that families often do not get their full benefit entitlement.

Bill reports that it was not just losing his job and a good income that was a source of stress – applying for IB was a nightmare:

‘There was one medical on top of another, they couldn’t decide... the doctors were doubting my word from the word go... they make out you’re always pulling the wool over their eyes... they’re trying to trip you up all the time... Medical assessments are not very sensitive at all... You walk in there and you’re made out to be a criminal and a fraud straight away... you shouldn’t be treated like that...’

Families worry constantly that their benefits will be reduced or taken away. Rose asks:

‘What do we do if this money stops? Will I say to my son who is dying, ‘Sorry we can’t come any more, they’ve stopped the money’?... You know, they can fine you or whatever, but who fines the Government?’

Gill, who facilitates a disabled parent group, explains that although the group was set up to provide support for people as parents, an enormous amount of time is spent discussing problems and issues around benefits. Parents in the group described the amount of time they spend trying to sort out their benefit claims, access emergency funds when their benefits do not come through, and discussing their needs with a huge array of officials who do not always display much understanding or sensitivity about learning disabilities: ‘They were so nasty to us, I came out crying. They make you feel this small.’ Families report that it is a full-time job to keep on top of things: ‘It’s a constant battle – especially when you don’t understand the forms.’ Two families in the group report that their benefits were stopped ‘just before Christmas’. ‘We had no food for the children – we had soup on Christmas day’. ‘I had to get some emergency support. I applied for £50 – they gave me £25.’

Denise, who has learning disabilities, reported on the stress involved when her severely disabled son lost his DLA:

‘They said he wasn’t disabled – they took it away – we went weeks without benefits.’

The family was also thrown into crisis when her husband lost his IB just before Christmas in 2004. They were sent the wrong form to fill in (a first-time application form rather than a renewal). When they got the right form back they had five days to fill it in. Although they returned the form by special delivery – and checked it had arrived safely – the office claimed it had not arrived. When Denise’s mother (who is a volunteer benefit adviser) contacted the IB office, she was told that all the files had been lost. Although the IB was reinstated at appeal in September 2005, it has yet to be paid.

## **Stigma**

Although the incidence of disability benefit fraud is very low, families feel themselves to be under permanent scrutiny, not just from benefit officials and medical practitioners, but also from members of the public.

Liz and Bill feel anxious about people knowing that they are reliant on benefits. Liz comments:

‘There are supposed to be a lot of concessions for people with low incomes and disabilities – but it’s only £1 or 50p or less...and then you’ve got the embarrassment of providing the proof – you’re in a queue with people looking over your shoulders... You feel put down all the time because you don’t work – people look down on you, people call you low life...’

Liz and Bill’s neighbour has recently reported them to the DWP for benefit fraud. Although a social security inspector has confirmed that they are entitled to their disability benefits, and advised them to take legal advice, they live in constant fear that they will lose their benefits.

Rose comments:

‘We don’t tell people we’re on income support, we pretend we’re in work. We don’t want to be judged... People seem to think if you’re on income support you’re a scrounger and you don’t want to work. People don’t know the whole situation, but why should we have to explain?...’

Disabled people who receive benefits often feel that if they undertake any activity – even if it is good for their health – they will lose their entitlement. As Liz comments:

‘The stupid thing is you’ve only got to do something on a regular basis, they think you’re doing something you shouldn’t be doing...’

Rose enjoys horse riding, but doing so has generated a certain amount of criticism:

‘I’ve ridden in the past, it makes a huge difference, but lots of people say ‘If you ride a horse why do you need so much help?’...but it improves me in quite a few ways... It’s nice to know that I can still do things...’

## Impact on children

Living on an inadequate income has an impact on children. Susie, who has given up work so she can spend more time with her daughter explains:

‘You do adjust because you get used to going without, but I do get upset if I can’t get something for Anna, that she should not ever suffer because I’m mentally ill and had to give up my job. It’s not her fault, and she shouldn’t be having a second-class life... Sometimes there have been trips at school where she would quite like to go, and I have to say ‘Well, that’s quite a lot of money and we would have to go into major debt’, and Anna says ‘Well, it’s not that important’ – but if we could have afforded it she would have wanted to go.’

Gill explains that the parents with learning disabilities who attend the group are very resourceful: ‘They start buying Christmas presents in October...’ However, parents in the group report that it is a struggle surviving on benefits. They worry about their children. ‘They don’t have things other children have’. ‘The kids can’t have shoes.’ ‘They just get bits and pieces – we never buy them new clothes, people give us clothes – the children don’t like it though...’ Maria comments:

‘Our son wants to go to France [with the school] but it’s going to cost £154 – I had to say no.’

Susie would not be able to cope without the financial support of her family. However, a number of families are not in touch with their extended families and have to cope on their own. Amrit comments:

‘...there is no family infrastructure or support – I really am a single person...’

Moving onto benefits is often associated with severe housing problems. Liz and Bill struggled to buy their council home in order to attain some level of long-term financial security, but when Bill moved onto IB they could not keep up with the mortgage payments and they lost their house:

‘We had to give up the house, we were threatened with B&B... Alexandra was a year old, Judith was 10...’

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## Services

The provision of appropriate support services is crucial to enable families to cope and stay together. However, families report that lack of coherent and sensitive supportive services, and the tendency to treat individual members of the family differently depending on whether they are a child, an adult or a carer, undermine the efficacy of statutory services, and compound the day-to-day stress involved in coping with a disability or health problem and in being a parent. Poor service provision increases costs and continues to have a negative impact upon disabled people's lives. Susie comments bitterly:

'The services don't fit people's lives, they don't even acknowledge that people have lives...'

Amrit reports:

'You're either too old, too young... There are too many things working against you...'

Although a number of documents and policy initiatives emanating from various government departments emphasise the importance of assessing disabled adults' parenting responsibilities,<sup>21</sup> families report that these are usually ignored. Amrit comments:

'The professionals around us don't see me as a mother... They see me as a 23-year-old Asian adult with mental health problems...they don't see the impact it has on my daughter.'

Susie reports:

'The hospital took quite good care of me...but I never sat down with the psychiatrists or the nurses. They never said 'What do you need to help you...to get more support in looking after your daughter so you could be with your daughter more... Unless I spoke about Anna she wasn't spoken about...'

Additional caring responsibilities, for parents as well as children, are sometimes overlooked. Susie reports:

'I was having to fight for my own rights and my father's rights...'

Although health practitioners are at the heart of the revised assessment process, families question whether they are the best people to assess their capability to work. Susie comments:

'The Government say 'Right, you go and see your GP – it's about time you go back to work, it's really good for you', but they can't help you into the right environment to get the support you need...'

The Green Paper relies heavily on decision makers to stream disabled people on the basis of evidence from a variety of medical practitioners. But disabled parents report that medical practitioners do not always agree:

'Now the Government are saying 'We've got to assess you to see if you can go out to work.' But how much does a person have to be pulled, and prodded and poked and questioned?... How can they separate people out?... I was under a GP, then you're under a neurologist, a cardiologist, you can add in a couple more [Ear Nose and Throat] people...and they're all telling you different things...'

## **Impact on children**

A number of parents express concern that lack of support for their own needs results in them making additional demands on their children. Ginny reports:

'The main thrust of what disabled parents need is to support them as adults in their parenting role, rather than to label their children as 'in need', which requires ongoing supervision and assessment of the parent's capacity to parent their children – which is often no more appropriate than for parents who are not disabled...'

Rose reports that her older children have had to help care for her because her husband spends a lot of overnight stays in hospital with Steven. She observes:

'They never have a childhood – always caring for somebody... They have to grow up very, very quickly...they're doing jobs they shouldn't be doing. I find

it quite abusive putting these kids through it because the Government won't provide care...'

Louise reports that:

'...I lean heavily on the rest of my family in a way that has been stressful for them. The girls – it's hard for me to decide what is reasonable for them – they have to help with cooking, but they have a lot of homework...'

Lack of support for their own care needs means that children sometimes miss out on everyday experiences. Liz comments:

'It's difficult to have Alexandra's friends over from school. If she has friends over they want to do things...'

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## **A message to the Government**

The families who participated in this small study provide some important messages for the Government. Although families believe that they have valuable skills and experiences, they highlight a number of concerns about the current system and the proposed changes and indicate which areas need much greater attention from policy makers.

### **Employment**

Families recognise that paid employment can bring significant psychological and financial advantages – and many want to work. However, they do not feel that it is appropriate to bring more pressure to bear on disabled people to access work when they already want to do so. Linda comments:

'It's not the incentives. People like me are trying hard and not getting anywhere... I don't need to find work, but I do want to be useful... If I was working I'd probably be £20 a week better off – I'd lose some housing, but I would get a bit more money. I wouldn't mind about the £20 it's for me, I want to help, I want to contribute something...'

**Disabled people should not be compelled to access paid employment – those who are willing and able to work should be provided with the support they need to do so. Those who cannot work should be provided with financial support that safeguards them and their children from poverty.**

### **Barriers to employment**

Families highlight a wide range of barriers to employment, including stigma and discrimination within society as a whole and among employers in particular, the inadequacies of the Access to Work system, difficulties gaining appropriate levels of qualifications and skills, and additional problems balancing employment with parental and caring responsibilities. Susie comments:

‘We need to see employers who understand the variety of issues they may have to deal with. We need somebody to liaise with that person so if they’re getting grotty they’ve got somebody to go and talk to...’

**Government initiatives need to recognise that disabled parents face additional barriers to employment. More work should be done to reduce discrimination in the labour market, and parenting and caring responsibilities must be taken into consideration during the assessment process.**

### **Low-paid work**

Disabled parents – many of whom are lone parents – are concerned about the type of work available. They worry that they will be forced to participate in paid employment that may be part time, low paid, or stressful and unrewarding. A recent report issued by the Commission on Women and Work indicates that women, who are more likely to work part time in low paid employment because of ‘taking time out of the labour market or reducing their working hours to care for children or other relatives’,<sup>22</sup> continue to be disadvantaged in the workplace. They are significantly more disadvantaged if they are disabled. Families are concerned that accessing low-paid employment will not help their children. Ginny comments:

‘[The Government] could put somebody on an income bracket to let them get help to look after their children better than if they were simply on benefit...’

**Increasing rates of employment among disabled parents will only help lift more children out of poverty if jobs are adequately paid and sustainable. Encouraging or compelling disabled parents to move into low-paid jobs will undermine official objectives on increasing employment and reducing child poverty.**

### **Costs of employment**

Although many disabled parents would like to be in paid employment, they emphasise that working is more costly for them – not just because they incur additional disability-related costs (such as travel and extra care needs), but in terms of family relationships and their own health. Disabled parents worry that balancing already complex lives alongside paid work may also have a negative impact on their ability to parent their children.

**The additional costs of employment must be taken into consideration during the assessment process when deciding whether employment is appropriate or how it may be supported. If not, it is unlikely to be sustained.**

### **Work-focused activities**

Although families want more support to help them access employment, they are concerned that the advice and training given are not always relevant or appropriate, and rarely lead to paid employment. Although the support of their personal advisers is valued and welcome, families point out that they cannot oblige employers to give them a job. Disabled parents who are actively seeking employment report that courses run by Jobcentre Plus may not be relevant and do not always result in paid employment. Endlessly job searching without success is demoralising.

**Parental responsibilities must be taken into consideration when drawing up action plans. Endless work-search activities may undermine disabled parents' ability to parent their children.**

### **Benefit adequacy**

Although families welcome the support that has been put in place to help disabled people – for example, disability premiums within income support and tax credits – they highlight a number of problems with the current benefit system, which have not been addressed by the proposed changes. These include poor information provision, low take-up of dis-

ability benefits, ineffective administration of the benefit and tax credit systems, and stigma. Families believe that more effort should go into ensuring that people get the benefits to which they are entitled. They question whether the proposals will improve the assessment process.

**The Government needs to ensure that disabled people receive the disability benefits to which they are entitled, and that benefit levels safeguard parents and children from poverty.**

## Service provision

Families emphasise that fragmented services impose additional costs and undermine their ability to access paid employment. They point out that welfare reform programme and assessment procedures do not consider a disabled person's parenting responsibilities when assessing her/his ability to seek employment or deciding what additional care is needed at work and at home.

Disabled parents highlight the difficulties of balancing their health needs or disability alongside their parental responsibilities. Many disabled parents have additional caring responsibilities. Given the difficulties they have accessing help at home, they are sceptical about the chances of receiving the additional support they need to access paid employment.

**Disabled parents do not just need support to help them access and retain employment, they need additional support for them and their children at home.**

## User involvement

Families highlight the importance of consulting disabled parents themselves when formulating policy. However, while *Fair Access to Care Services* stipulates that 'Councils should ensure that individuals are active partners in the assessment of their needs' and emphasises that 'Councils should recognise that individuals are the experts on their own situation and encourage a partnership approach to assessment', families are concerned that this approach is lacking in the Green Paper. Ginny comments:

'When they come to assessing people...they should also be looking at the sort of criteria in the *Fair Access to Care* document produced by the Department of Health<sup>23</sup> which requires that a disabled person should

be supported to undertake their social role – and that includes raising children...’

**Families feel that they are the experts, and that they should be effectively and meaningfully consulted about policies that affect both them and their children.**

## Notes

- 1 Department for Work and Pensions, *A New Deal for Welfare: empowering people to work*, The Stationery Office, 2006
- 2 See H Stickland, Background paper for the HMT/DWP seminar ‘Disabled Parents and Employment’, 24 November 2003
- 3 HM Treasury, *Child Poverty Review*, The Stationery Office, 2004, published as part of the Spending Review 2004, reports that: ‘There are around one million workless, disabled parents. A significant proportion say they would like to work.’ (p22). The recently published *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* reports that: ‘Among workless households with children the majority have at least one disabled parent...’ It confirms that ‘a quarter of children living in poverty have long-term sick or disabled parents.’ (pp46 and 83)
- 4 HM Treasury, *Child Poverty Review*, The Stationery Office, 2004, p61
- 5 See note 4, p46
- 6 Department for Work and Pensions, *Households Below Average Income 1994/95-2004/05*, Corporate Document Services, 2006, Tables 4.4 and 4.7 show that before housing costs, of 2.4 million poor children, 26 per cent (around 624,000) were both income poor and recorded as living in a household with one or more disabled adult. The risk of income poverty for this group is 31 per cent (against an average risk for all children of 19 per cent).
- 7 See note 6, p22
- 8 T Burchardt, ‘Barriers to Employment for Disabled Parents: the double whammy’, paper delivered to HMT/DWP seminar ‘Disabled Parents and Employment’, 24 November 2003
- 9 J Casebourne and L Britton, *Lone Parents, Health and Work*, DWP Research Report 214, Department for Work and Pensions, 2004
- 10 See note 2
- 11 J Morris, *The Right Support: report on the task force on supporting disabled adults in their parenting role*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2003
- 12 Department of Health, *Fair Access to Care Services: guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care*, 2003
- 13 See note 4, p83
- 14 Used by Tony Blair in a speech in Hungary, 15 February 2004

- 15 A phrase which peppers the Green Paper, see note 1
- 16 See G Palmer, J Carr and P Kenway, *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute, 2005
- 17 See, for example, N Smith, S Middleton, K Ashton-Brooks, L Cox and B Dobson with L Reith, *Disabled People's Costs of Living: 'more than you would think?'*, The Policy Press for Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004
- 18 See Cabinet Office, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, 2005 (a joint report with the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), p103, footnote 140 and note 12
- 19 See, for example, G Preston, *Family Values: disabled parents, extra costs and the benefit system*, Disability Alliance, 2004
- 20 Although there are no recent figures on take-up of DLA, estimated take-up of DLA care component is between 30 per cent and 50 per cent and take-up of DLA mobility component is estimated to be between 50 per cent and 70 per cent. See P Craig and M Greenslade, *First Findings from the Disability Follow-up to the Family Resources Survey*, Research Summary 5, HMSO, 1998
- 21 See note 18
- 22 Women and Work Commission, *Shaping a Fairer Future*, 2006 states that 'women are crowded into a narrow range of lower-paying occupations, mainly those available part time that do not make the best of their skills... Women returning to the labour market after time spent looking after children often find it difficult to find a job that matches their skills.' (p1)
- 23 See note 12