

Chairs appointed to network to give disabled people stronger voice.

Regional chairs have been announced to move forward work to break down the barriers disabled people and their families face in everyday life.

The appointees will lead 9 new Regional Stakeholder Networks tasked with amplifying the voices of disabled people and disability organisations in regions across England, reporting back to government on a range of issues including transport, housing and employment.

The chairs of the network were selected based on their understanding of disability issues specific to their regions, their expertise in disability policy and its effects at the grassroots level.

Minister for Disabled People Justin Tomlinson said:

If we are truly to break down the barriers faced by disabled people in everyday life, it's vital that we listen to their views.

All the chairs have a wealth of experience, expertise and skills which qualify them for these crucial roles. I am delighted at the calibre of the successful candidates and looking forward to working with the Regional Stakeholder Network to drive change and improve the lives of disabled people across the country.

Many of the 8 chairs are disabled people, while others work in disabled people's organisations or organisations that support disabled people.

Several hold other roles in a voluntary capacity which will help them tap into the issues and concerns of their local networks.

The chairs will convene meetings with network members within their regions and work with the government's Office for Disability Issues to help inform future policy.

The first meeting between the chairs is due to take place today.

The Network chairs are:

East of England: Naomi Marek OBE, CEO, Sky Badger

Greater London: Ruth Owen OBE, CEO, Whizz-Kidz

North East: Michael Potts, Board Member, Veterans Advisory and Pension Committee

North West: Lynne Turnbull, CEO, Cheshire Centre for Independent Living

South East: Barry Ginley, Director, Tamstone Consulting Ltd

South West: Samantha Everard, CEO, Support and Mentoring Enabling Entrepreneurship (SAMEE)

West and East Midlands: Louise Mckiernan, CEO, Birmingham Disability Resource Centre

Yorkshire and the Humber: Liz Leach Murphy, Founder/Managing Director, Imagineer CIC