

# Inclusive action plan to increase apprenticeship opportunities for disabled people

The Minister launched the action plan at an event held in conjunction with Equality and Human Rights Commission to mark the International Day for Disabled People in Cardiff today, where employers disability organisations and other key stakeholders came together to discuss the issue and encourage more employers to take on more apprentices, particularly those with disabilities.

Created by a working group of specialist disability organisations, the action plan feeds into the Welsh Government's Employability Plan, which includes an action to provide an individualised approach to employability support that is responsive to an individual's needs. It takes account of personal circumstances, barriers, aptitudes and ambitions Ensuring there are opportunities for disabled people to find and stay in work is a key element of this.

The action plan aims to help people like Twm Draper who has completed a level three apprenticeship in customer care with BT in March. Twm now works as a full-time consumer help case manager. Twm has a bilateral hearing impairment and uses an adapted headset that blocks out background noise. This is the only adjustment his employer has had to make for him.

Twm said:

"After sixth-form, I didn't want to go to university, I wanted to work for a big company and I wanted to start earning money, so I looked into what apprenticeships were out there. I love my job and just get on with it,"

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan, said:

"There are not enough disabled people in work. In Wales, just 45% of working-age disabled people are currently in employment, compared to 80% of those who are not disabled. This is not acceptable. It is something I want to see change."

"This isn't a purely altruistic process. Employing diverse work groups can create better solutions to business challenges, increase productivity, and encourage creativity. Having a work force that reflects a company's customer base means they can better understand their needs and issues that affect them."

"Apprenticeships are a proven route into sustainable employment and

I am proud that we have a successful Apprenticeship Programme here in Wales. However, the makeup of the apprentice cohort is far from representative of the diverse society in which we live. Encouraging disabled people to apply for apprenticeships and making sure potential employers are aware of the support that is available is vital in changing this. This is the aim of our Inclusive Apprenticeships Action Plan.”