

Press release: New champions to fight for rights of disabled consumers

Using their industry influence, the champions will remove the obstacles faced by disabled consumers across the technology, countryside and heritage, products and spaces, brand and design and web accessibility sectors.

Minister for Disabled People Sarah Newton said:

For too long businesses have been missing out on the spending power of disabled customers and their families – worth a staggering £249 billion a year.

Sadly disabled people are often locked out from the everyday experiences many of us take for granted, whether that's enjoying the great outdoors or benefitting from latest innovations in technology.

Our new champions will fight for the rights of disabled consumers so they can spend their money where and when they want, just like everyone else.

They join 14 existing champions who have already made significant progress in improving accessibility across a diverse range of industries, from insurance to music.

The new brand and design champion is Marianne Waite, founder and director of Think Designable and inclusive design consultant for Omnicom.

Brand and design champion Marianne Waite said:

Despite 90% of brands claiming to prioritise diversity and inclusion, only 4% consider the needs of disabled consumers.

I want to help hardwire inclusive design into mainstream brand practice and encourage creative teams to invest in insight from disabled consumers to drive much needed innovation.

It's time for brands to wake up to the business, economic and social benefits of disability inclusion.

The 5 new disability champions are:

- brand and design: Marianne Waite, Founder of Think Designable
- countryside and heritage: Heather Smith, National Equality Specialist for the National Trust
- products and spaces: Ed Warner, Founder of Motionspot

- technology: Patrick Stephenson, Client Managing Director for Central and Local Government at Fujitsu
- web accessibility: Paul Smyth, Head of Digital Accessibility at Barclays

The 14 existing disability champions are:

- advertising: Sam Phillips, CMO at Omnicom Media Group
- airports: Michael Connolly, Regional Training and Standards Manager at OCS ltd
- arts and culture: Andrew Miller, National Council Member for the Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales
- banking: Trudie Hills, Disability Manager, Lloyds Bank
- buses: Jane Cole, Managing Director at Blackpool Transport Services
- gaming: Dr Jo Twist OBE, CEO of UKIE
- hotels: Robin Sheppard, Chairman of Bespoke Hotels
- insurance: Johnny Timpson, Financial Protection Technical & Industry Affairs Manager, Scottish Widows
- leisure: Huw Edwards, Public Affairs Director at UKActive
- media: Dan Brooke, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Channel 4
- music: Suzanne Bull MBE, CEO of Attitude is Everything
- rail: Stephen Brookes OBE, Member of Rail Delivery Group's Governance Group and Non-Executive Director of Blackpool Transport
- retail: Samantha Sen, Head of Policy and Campaigns at Revo (Interim)
- tourism: Chris Veitch, Co-founder of Access New Business

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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