

**Editor in Chief** Ian Peate

**Editor** Sophie Gardner  
sophie.gardner@markallengroup.com

**Chief Subeditor**  
Janet Perham  
janet.perham@markallengroup.com

**Subeditors**  
Carolyn Crawley  
carolyn.crawley@markallengroup.com

Vicqui Stuart-Jones  
vicqui.stuart-jones@markallengroup.com

**Clinical Series Editor** Barry Hill

**Commercial Manager**  
Edward Croome  
edward.croome@markallengroup.com

**Circulation Director**  
Sally Boettcher  
sally.boettcher@markallengroup.com

**MedEd Manager**  
Tracy Cowan  
tracy.cowan@markallengroup.com

**Production Manager** Kyri Apostolou

**Production Assistant** Larry Oakes

**Designer** Hal Bannister

**Publishing Director**  
Andrew Iafrazi  
andrew.iafrazi@markallengroup.com

**Managing Director** Anthony Kerr

**Chief Executive Officer** Ben Allen

#### UK PERSONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Quarterly Direct Debit	£47
Annual Direct Debit	£184
Annual Credit Card	£194
2yr Annual Credit Card	£330
3yr Annual Credit Card	£466

Subscribe online: [www.magsubscriptions.com](http://www.magsubscriptions.com),  
Subscribe by phone: +44 (0) 1722 716997

Contact: [institutions@markallengroup.com](mailto:institutions@markallengroup.com)  
for institutional pricing

**MA Healthcare**

Part of

**Mark Allen**

[www.markallengroup.com](http://www.markallengroup.com)

British Journal of Nursing is published by MA Healthcare Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB  
Tel: 020 7738 5454  
Editorial: 020 7501 6702  
Sales: 020 7501 6732  
Email: [bjn@markallengroup.com](mailto:bjn@markallengroup.com)  
Websites: [www.britishjournalofnursing.com](http://www.britishjournalofnursing.com)

#### MAG ONLINE LIBRARY

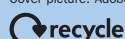
© MA Healthcare Ltd, 2024. All rights reserved. No part of British Journal of Nursing may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishing Director.

Please read our privacy policy, by visiting <http://privacypolicy.markallengroup.com>. This will explain how we process, use & safeguard your data

British Journal of Nursing is a double-blind, peer-reviewed journal. It is indexed on the main databases, including the International Nursing Index, Medline and the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or British Journal of Nursing. Advertisements in the journal do not imply endorsement of the products or services advertised.

ISSN 0966 - 0461  
Print: Pensord Press Ltd, Dowlais, CF48 3TD  
Distribution: Comag Distribution, West Drayton, UB7 7QE  
Cover picture: Adobe Stock



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

# Disability and work: breaking the barriers

Ian Peate FRCN OBE, Editor in Chief, *British Journal of Nursing*



In the UK there are around 16 million people with a disability (Kirk-Wade, 2023). In England, in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 60% of COVID-19-related deaths occurred among disabled individuals. People with learning disabilities faced an astonishing eight times higher risk of death from COVID-19 than the general population. The statistics are alarming but what is equally distressing is that many disabled individuals are not surprised by these findings. These numbers highlight the numerous inequalities that disabled people continue to face in British society (Fenney et al, 2022). The Equality Act 2010 prohibits disability discrimination in various areas of life, including services, employment and education.

There are approximately one million disabled individuals in the UK who aspire to work (Scope, 2023a) but they encounter obstacles that prevent them from doing so, including discrimination by employers, difficulties in accessing necessary support and inflexible working arrangements. Disabled people are being pushed out of jobs because they cannot get the flexibility that they need in order to do their job. Delay in providing them with the equipment and/or support that they need may mean that they have to work without reasonable adjustments being made and as a result they can be perceived as underperforming.

It has to be acknowledged that not all disabled people can work. Continuing to blame disabled people for the rise in 'economically inactive' individuals is a convenient excuse (Taylor, 2024). The true issues that need addressing include the additional costs of disability that current state services fail to cover, the discriminatory attitudes of employers and the broken benefits system. Only by tackling these failures can we create a truly equal future for everyone.

Individuals with disabilities persistently face unfair extra costs. According to Mallorie and Row (2023), disabled individuals typically earn less and incur higher living expenses than their non-disabled counterparts, making it unsurprising that the cost-of-living crisis has disproportionately affected them – 50% of disabled individuals report reducing their spending on food and other essentials due to rising living costs, compared with 38% of non-disabled individuals. The increased expenses for specialised equipment, greater use of everyday necessities and energy and abysmal shortcomings in the welfare system all contribute to the heightened difficulty that disabled households face (Scope, 2023b).

If the barriers faced by disabled people who aspire to work are to be addressed, concerted efforts are needed from various stakeholders. This may involve implementing anti-discrimination measures in the workplace, providing better access to support services, promoting inclusive employment practices and advocating for policies that foster workplace flexibility and appropriate accommodation. We need to quash the grossly offensive, hostile and damaging notion that there is a 'sick note culture'.

The new government must take a proactive approach in addressing the needs and concerns of disabled individuals. This begins with actively listening to disabled people about the changes that are necessary to improve their lives. Enhancing workplace health through innovative, responsive and individualised initiatives will be of benefit to each and every one of us. **BJN**

Fenney D, Wellings D, Lennon E, Hadi F; The King's Fund and Disability Rights UK. Towards a new partnership between disabled people and health and care services: getting our voices heard. 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/padwthb8> (accessed 11 September 2024)

Kirk-Wade E. UK Disability statistics: prevalence and life experiences. House of Commons Library briefing CBP-9602. 2023. <https://tinyurl.com/yc5xrjey> (accessed 11 September 2024)

Mallorie S, Row L. Struggling to be heard: understanding the experience of disabled people in England. The King's Fund, 6 June 2023. <https://tinyurl.com/bdcvt24v> (accessed 11 September 2024)

Scope. An equal future. 2023a. <https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/an-equal-future-strategy> (accessed 11 September 2024)

Scope. Disability price tag. 2023b. <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag> (accessed 11 September 2024)

Taylor J. The UK doesn't have a "sick note culture," but it does have a broken benefits system. *BMJ*. 2024; 385:q1067. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q1067>