

Employing Disabled People through IT tools in the EU
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1. Introduction

Employing disabled people through IT tools in the EU or 'IT CHANCE' for short is a Leonardo partnership project funded through the European Lifelong Learning Programme. The Leonardo partnership is made up of 6 partners from across Europe including the UK, Poland, Portugal, Bulgaria and Slovakia. Partners have come together to share knowledge on the topic and exchange ideas and forms of best practice from each country in order to get a 'European outlook' on the topic, with the ultimate end goal of developing a best practice guide.

The project aims to look at ways that different European countries support people with disabilities into employment in the contact centre industry. It aims to look at the way that the contact centre supports people with disabilities, at how effective employment in contact centres can be for people with disabilities, at the potential for different forms of employment such as in house or remote working, technology available for employees with disabilities and any other issues that are relevant and highlighted as the research is undertaken. Each partner in the project is expected to complete an individual report, with the same structure, in order to research the topic in depth in their own country. The reports will then be shared amongst all partners, and each partner will be expected to present their findings. Any similarities or differences from the findings of the report will be highlighted, and a type of matrix will be developed to present the similarities and differences in an easy format. The end goal of the project is to produce a best practice guide, and the report findings, any examples of best practice and the matrix will all be used so that partners can work together to develop the best practice guide.

Both secondary and primary research methods were used in this report. Statistics on unemployment and the current state of the contact centre industry were gathered through secondary research, and primary research was used to collect information specifically on disabled employment in contact centres. Some limitations encountered through the secondary research was the lack of in depth statistics and information on contact centres in the UK, especially employment levels and the number of disabled employees. Primary research was used to talk to employers at contact centres and gain an insight into the way contact centres feel about employing people with disabilities, if they have any specially adapted technology for

disabled employees and how flexible they can be with working patterns or arrangements to accommodate disabled employees. A major limitation with the primary research was the lack of contactor centre employers who were willing to take part in the research. This means that although there is some primary research in the report it is only a small sample and the findings may not be as reliable or accurate as if there was a bigger sample used. In the future it may be necessary to use some form of incentive to try to get employers to complete the questionnaires and gain a bigger sample.

2. A review of the current situation of disabled employment

Looking at unemployment levels in the UK as a whole, unemployment is now at an average rate of 7.8% (May 2013, BBC). Looking at the city of Wolverhampton, where our organization WNC is based and where it delivers the majority of its work and community development projects, 8% of the city's 249,500 are unemployed (Feb 2013, WCC). It is clear to see that the unemployment rate in the city of Wolverhampton is higher than the average rate across the UK. Looking at unemployment statistics in even more depth, the South east borough of Wolverhampton is the fifth worst affected area in the UK with an unemployment rate of 9.3% (May 2013, BBC). Again this clearly shows that the South East borough in Wolverhampton faces tough challenges in the current economic climate and a high proportion of the community in this area are now unemployed.

In the UK there are currently over 11million people with limiting long term illness, impairment or disability (Family Survey, 2011). The Equalities Act 2010 recognises 9 protected characteristics; Age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. You are identified as disabled under the equalities act if you have a physical or mental impairment that has 'long term' and 'substantial' impact on your ability to do normal activities. There are further guidelines laid out by the government on issues surrounding the definition of disability such as what defines normal activities? What is counted as impairment? What about people who have had a disability in the past? Using these guidelines on how we define a disability, the Labour force Survey (Feb, 2012) identified that only 43.6% of people with disabilities who are of working age are in employment compared to 76.4% of working age non-disabled people. Although this gap is a significant one, it has been reduced by 10% over the last 14 years according to the Labour force survey.

UK government guidelines have been put in place to help support both disabled employees and their employers. Guidelines state that an employer has to make 'reasonable adjustments' to avoid an employee being at a disadvantage because of their disability. These reasonable adjustments may include things such as special IT equipment, or adjusting working hours or shift patterns to accommodate the disabled employee and create a level playing field amongst all employees.

The 'Access to Work Scheme' is a grants scheme that has been put in place by the government to assist employers and ensure they aren't being put at a financial disadvantage by employing a disabled person. The scheme provides grants to help employers with the costs involved in making the reasonable adjustments for a disabled employee so that the employee can do their job properly and the employer has not been disadvantaged. The scheme is in place to support both the employer and the employee, but also to try to encourage more employers to employ persons with a disability. Although the scheme is to help the employer with the costs involved in making reasonable adjustments, it is the employee who must initiate the process of applying for the grant, and then an advisor from the 'Access to Work' team would contact both employer and employee to find out more about the individual's circumstances as each application for the grant would be different depending on both the employee and the employer. Not only does the scheme cover individuals with a physical disability who may need special equipment in order to do their job effectively, it also looks at individuals with a mental disability who may need support when starting a new job, reducing the amount of absences they take from the job or support in staying in the job. However there are conditions in place around an employee's eligibility for the scheme with regards to the benefits that the individual is already claiming.

Another incentive which is in place in the UK to encourage employers to hire disabled employees is the 'Youth Contract – Wage Incentives'. This scheme focuses on supporting young people aged between 18-24 into work. The scheme allows an employer to claim up to £2,275 when they employ a disadvantaged or disabled young person via the job centre plus or the work programme. One of the conditions of the scheme is that the employer must keep the young person in employment for at least 26 weeks (6 months). The scheme acts as an incentive to employers to take on disadvantaged or disabled young persons, and aims to get more disabled young people into the labour market. In the Wage Incentive Scheme it is up to the employer to work with Job Centre plus and the work programme, and once they have employed a disabled or disadvantaged young person they then need to make the claim straight to the Department for Working Pensions who will assess the claim and pay the grant if the claim is successful.

3. Current state of the Contact Centre Industry and the Economic outlook for the Future

A report completed by the CFA skills at work showed that in 2012 there were over 1 million people in the UK employed by contact centres. However this data is very limited and there are no breakdowns of the types of people employed such as ages, sex or disabilities. Therefore there is no definitive analysis of the number of disabled people employed by contact centres. This is not just the case for contact centres, but in the UK across the whole labour market there is often a lack of information about the types of jobs and the sectors disabled people are employed within making it difficult to make an analysis on the situation.

If we take into account a report written by the European Disability Network in 2009 which looks at different categories of work that disabled people are employed in across Europe it highlights that contact centre workers would fall into the category of service workers and shop workers. This is mainly due to the customer service aspect of the contact centre role that is closely

related to service workers and shop and market sales employees. In the report conducted in 2009, the Academic Network of European Disability Experts stated that 20.6% of disabled people in employment at that time were employed in the service workers and shop and market sales industry. Although this report gives us a figure of disabled employees in the category which contact centres fall into, it does not then break down the percentage into more detail and we cannot see a figure for disabled employees in the contact centre industry. This is a limitation to the research and as stated before is the situation when looking at disabled employment figures across the entire job market in the UK.

In the current economic climate across Europe and further afield, the number of jobs in the contact centre industry have continued to increase. According to a report conducted in 2011 by OPH, figures rose 899,000 in 2005 to 1,071,125 in 2011. This is clearly a large increase in the number of people employed, and creates a positive feel for the outlook of the contact centre industry in the UK given the current economic climate we face.

Contact centres in the UK vary in size, from small businesses that employ only a few people to large companies such as Santander bank who employ over 500 people across their contact centres. Contact centres can handle both incoming calls and outgoing calls. Some contact centres, such as Korl Assist Ltd, are specifically designed to handle calls and promote sales for a variety of other smaller organisations who want to outsource this area of their business. Korl Assist Ltd is a call centre based in Wakefield in the North of the UK that since 2011 have been providing a premier call answering service to self employed trades people across the UK. The reasoning behind the company being set up was due to research showing that over 80% of people do not like leaving answerphone messages so many work opportunities for sole traders are missed because rather than leaving a voice mail people will ring a competitor. Korl Assist Ltd employees handle the call and then send an SMS text to the sole trader with the business opportunity, and Korl Assist Ltd works with businesses that vary from builders to driving instructors to mobile hairdressers. (Korl Assist Ltd, 2011).

There is a current trend to move UK contact centres abroad as big companies can make huge savings by paying lower salaries to employees in countries like India rather than the UK. A few examples of UK companies that have moved their contact centres abroad in recent years include, BT, Aviva and Santander (Open Contact centre 2013). In some cases contact centres shifted their entire customer handling service to one or more foreign countries and it appeared that India had become the contact centre capital of the world. This clearly has a negative impact on the entire contact centre job market in UK, not only disabled people looking for work or those who were already employed by contact centres. However in more recent months it has been reported that huge companies such as Santander banking are moving their contact centres back to the UK. The UK's third biggest bank said moving its contact centres back to the UK would create around 500 jobs. This is in a bid to improve customer service, it will create good publicity for the companies as creating new jobs in the current UK job market is seen very positively by the UK public, but also because wages are rising in India as well as the cost of

buildings although the cost of buildings in the UK appear to be remaining stagnant (Open Contact Centre, 2013). Companies are now beginning to compete on service rather than price, and it is the general feeling of the UK public that they are more likely to get their point across if they are talking to someone from the UK. Looking at these points we can see that although there may have been a trend in outsourcing UK contact centres to countries abroad, which clearly created a decrease in the number of jobs in the contact centre industry we can see recent patterns are creating a shift into the industry becoming more predominant in the UK industry again. This shift will not only create more jobs in the UK market in general, as we can see moving Santander back created 500 more jobs in the UK, but it should increase the number of disabled people employed in the sector.

4. Potential for Disabled Employment within the contact centre Industry

As highlighted in the previous section of the report, it is difficult to gain an exact figure of the amount of disabled people employed within the contact centre industry across the UK, especially using secondary research and through looking at statistics. To try to gain a more realistic perspective of disabled employment in the sector, and the opportunities and possibility of disabled employment within the sector primary research was also conducted. Questionnaires were sent out to 26 UK based contact centres of varying sizes, a copy of which can be found in the appendices of this report. However very few contact centres responded to the questionnaire, which is clearly a big limitation of this report.

Adaptive technology is the name for types of products that help people who cannot use regular versions of products, primarily people with physical disabilities such as limitations to vision, hearing and mobility. Adaptive technology promotes greater effectiveness for individuals with functional limitations or disabilities by enabling them to perform tasks that they were previously unable to complete, or experienced great difficulty trying to complete. Adaptive technology is created to provide changed methods of interacting with or enhancements to the technology. (Disabled persons' organisations, 2010). Microsoft state that when selecting the right type of adaptive or assistive technology it is crucial to find the products that are compatible with the computer operating system and programs on the computer being used. This is something for employers to take into consideration when they are looking to adapt computers to make them more accessible for their disabled employees.

There is current IT technology that is available for people with disabilities and much of this can be applied and adapted for use in contact centres. As explained in section 2 of this report there is a huge range of recognized disabilities in the UK, but the main types of disabilities that affect an individual's use of a computer are physical or sensory disabilities. Companies and charities exist in the UK to make IT more accessible for people with disabilities. Assist IT is training and consultancy company that works to make computers more accessible for the disabled, and

provide training on how to make the best use of the equipment that they provide. (Assist IT, 2013) Assist IT stock many different types of adapted computer keyboards that make using keyboards much easier for people with many different types of disabilities. For example the Cherry G84 keyboard is a smaller version of the QWERTY keyboard and its compact size means that it can fit on a wheelchair tray and leave plenty of room for a mouse or trackball if also required. Assist IT also stock a keyguard which can be very useful for people with fine motor skills difficulties. The keyguard can help to identify the correct key thereby eliminating wrong key presses, and it also allows individuals to rest their hands on the keyboard without worrying about hitting any other keys. (Assist IT, 2013). Assist IT also offers specially adapted mice and trackballs, which are often extremely useful for people who lack fine motor skills. The BigTrack is a valuable tool for users who lack fine motor skills which a regular mouse requires. Just a touch from a knee, finger, elbow, toe or foot on the huge yellow ball is all it takes to cruise around the computer screen and a tap on one of the blue buttons pulls out various other computer functions. (Assist IT, 2013) Another adapted computer product that can be used by individuals who suffer from poor or no fine motor skills is voice recognition software. This software allows the individual to control the computer by speaking. (Motor Disabilities Assistive Technologies, 2013). The adaptations of both the keyboard and the mouse or tracker ball can be used in the workplace by people with disabilities, particularly those with fine motor skills problems and would make working in any job that requires the use of computers much more accessible, and can be applied to the contact centre industry. However as previously stated in section 2 of the report, adaptations can be extremely expensive so employers and individuals may wish to use schemes that provide financial support for adaptations that are required for a disabled person to be able to work properly in their specific type of employment.

Microsoft list a range of assistive technologies including alternative input devices which allow individuals to control their computer through other means instead of the standard keyboard or pointing device; these include alternative keyboards, wands and sticks, joysticks, trackballs and touch screens. Other types of assistive computer technologies listed by Microsoft which are available include screen enlargers which make it easier for people with visual impairments to see items on the computer, and screen readers which are used to speak everything that is on the screen including text and desktop items or buttons and are essential for computer users who are blind. These examples that are listed by Microsoft, as well as the other types of assistive technologies listed above show that there are many systems and programs available to make computers accessible for disabled individuals, and this should be taken into account by employers so that they can think about adapting their computer systems to accommodate their disabled employees.

The potential for remote working in contact centres is something that has been looked into over the past few years, with the advantages and disadvantages being investigated through working directly with contact centres. In 2011, Jabra and analysis institute Frost and Sullivan conducted a survey of 250 contact centres worldwide, including in Great Britain, France, the USA, India and China. The report highlights that nearly 6 out of 10 of the contact centres interviewed see the

future of contact centres lying with employees working remotely rather than from a centralized office. This is clearly an advantage for individuals who suffer from a mobility disability which means they are often confined to their home but are capable of doing the work required by the employer in the contact centre. The key findings of this research show there are both advantages and disadvantages to remote working for both the employers and the employee. The biggest disadvantage that contact centre managers need to overcome according to the report is the lack of face to face contact between the employer and the employee, and 9 out of 10 of the contact centres involved in the survey rated this as the biggest disadvantage of remote working. When the contact centres in the survey were asked about the advantages of employing remote employees 73% stated increased flexibility as an advantage and 73% said being more cost effective was an advantage.

The survey also highlighted that it is the larger contact centres that are more likely to consider having remote employees, or are most likely to be using remote employees currently. The survey highlighted that 84% of contact managers in large firms (over 500 seats/employees) saw remote working as the way forward in the industry, with only 69% of medium sized contact managers (100-500 seats) and 46% of small contact centre managers (fewer than 100 seats). This clearly shows that disabled people who suffer from mobility issues are more likely to find remote employment with larger contact centres, yet there are still barriers that need to be overcome by all sized contact centres in relation to remote working which have been mentioned above. There clearly is potential for remote working within the contact centre industry, which is often a positive aspect for people who suffer from a mobility disability and can offer them a full time or part time job which is flexible and suited to their needs; this is something that can be used in the future to help get more disabled individuals into employment. However there are limitations with this research as it was not conducted solely within the UK, so for the purpose of this report we cannot see the exact figures that are applicable remote working in contact centres in the UK.

With regards to employing disabled staff and them working 'in house' as previously mentioned in section 2 of this report it is stated in UK government guidelines that an employer has a responsibility to make 'reasonable' adjustments for an employee with a disability in order for them to be able to complete the tasks involved in their role. As previously mentioned in section 2 there are schemes available in the UK to help support the employer to make these reasonable adjustments such as the 'Access to Work' scheme. These schemes and guidelines are in place to benefit both the employee and the employer, and to ultimately increase the number of disabled individuals in employment. If we look at the potential for in house working for disabled employees in the call centre industry we can see through our previous findings that there is a lot of computer assistive technology that can benefit disabled individuals and allow them to complete their tasks effectively so this can be applied to working with IT tools in the contact centre and potentially lead to more disabled employees being able to work in a contact centre environment.

5. Employment Needs of the Contact Centre Industry

According to the National Careers Service, which is developed by the UK government, the skills required to work in a contact centre are excellent customer service skills, a clear and friendly telephone voice, good computer skills, excellent communication skills, good teamwork skills and the ability to work unsupervised, the ability to work quickly and under pressure, a professional attitude when dealing with customers and a foreign language in specific jobs. The National Careers Service states that no formal qualifications are usually required although the potential employee should have a good basic standard or literacy, numeracy and IT skills, especially as job interviews may include a telephone and keyboard test to determine whether the potential employee has the skill levels in these areas appropriate to the job. A person who has a disability affecting their use of a computer and IT skills should still be able to complete the IT activities relating to the job properly if there is an assistive IT product that makes computers accessible to them and their employer recognizes this and allows for the product to be purchased and used. Even though there are no formal qualifications required to work in a contact centre, many colleges in the UK offer courses that would be of benefit to an individual, whether they are disabled or able bodied, if they are looking for work in a contact centre. These courses are the Level 1 Award for Introduction to Customer Service, which is the main skill required by employees in the contact centre industry, or the Level 1 Certificate for Introduction to the Contact Centre Industry which relates directly to the contact centre industry. We can see from this that although no formal qualifications are required there are options to enhance your skills that are transferable to the contact centre industry, and these options (college courses) are available to both able bodied individuals and individuals who suffer a disability as colleges in the UK will not discriminate against any person, and there are policies and procedures in place in colleges to protect disabled individuals and allow them the best learning environments.

Career progression in call centres is something else to be considered when looking at the employment needs of the contact centre industry. An article titled 'Progression in a contact centre – how can you develop and progress' written and published by call centre helper.com in 2012 looks at career progression in detail. The article is written by ex employees from contact centres, and takes into account both career progression within contact centres as well as outside of the organisations. The article states that if you are good at explaining things to your colleagues and going through processes there are usually 'buddies' schemes where you can help to settle new employees into the role. The article goes onto explain that this is a good introduction to becoming either a team leader or a trainer. The clear line of progression within the contact centre according to the Call Centre Helper.com is to move onto the role of team leader or trainer, and the article explains that when these job opportunities come up they are most likely to be advertised internally and taken by an existing member of the team. This is clearly because an existing team member will already have extensive knowledge of the procedures of the company and the way things work, so if they possess the right skills required then they will be the ideal candidate to be team leader. The 'buddies' scheme highlighted in the article is an internal training scheme which is created by organisations primarily to benefit new employees, however as mentioned above it also develops leadership and training skills of

existing employees. Call Centre Helper.com also highlights another avenue of career progression, this is progression into the 'Operational Management Support team'. This is often a role suitable for individuals who are technically minded, analytical and good with figures. This role clearly requires a different set of skills than the role of a general call centre employee, but there is the option to progress into it in certain organisations if an individual has the correct skills. The career progression paths in contact centres in the UK should be open to any individual within an organisation once the opportunity arises and this is something which the government ensures by putting in policies such as the Equalities Act 2010. The Equalities Act 2010 will ensure that a disabled employee is not discriminated against when going for a promotion or a different job if they have the skills required in the role, and will create a level playing field amongst all employees regardless of disability.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission produced a guidance information booklet in 2009 on 'A manager's guide to flexible working'. The guide looks at the business benefits of flexible working, how to create a flexible working place, management skills required, a flexible working place for all different job types and the impact on employees. The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that employees are critical in delivering customer satisfaction and value, and they will usually be more motivated to achieve what the business needs when they have more flexibility in their working arrangements. The guide highlights the fact that there is government legislation in place to help people manage their jobs and caring responsibilities, and employers should take any requests for flexible working seriously, and if they turn the request down they must give business reasons as to why they have had to. When looking at the benefits that flexible working can bring to an organisation the guide shows it can bring increased customer service cover, greater employee satisfaction and loyalty, more efficient use of office space, enhance reputation as an employer and less commuting by employees working from home which has environmental benefits. The guide clearly evidences the benefits for the employer, but a lot of these benefits relate back to the employees as well including the less commuting times and greater employee satisfaction. Less commuting time and the possibility of working from home is an aspect of flexible working that would be of benefit to an employee with a mobility disability, who is capable of completing the tasks involved with the job yet would find it difficult to commute to the workplace. When we relate flexible working hours directly back to contact centre work and employees, by looking at my job search.com, a careers and job search website, we can conclude that there is often a lot of flexible work available in contact centres. The job search website states that it is usually easy to find a balance between working and home life, and there is often a lot of part time work available. The website goes on to explain that 24hour operating contact centres often require employees to work shifts to ensure the centre is fully operating at all times and this shift work may include unsociable hours, however some of the 24hour contact centres specifically employ staff to cover the unsociable shifts such as night staff.

We can see that there is the opportunity for flexible working, and different shift patterns in contact centres, mainly because of the nature of the work and the desire by customers to be

able to access businesses/services whenever they require them. The different shift patterns, especially the variety that would be available in large contact centres which operate 24 hours a day, may be more suited to certain employees than to others, regardless of whether they are able bodied or disabled. For example working shifts may be more suited to someone with a young family, who needs to manage childcare arrangements with their partner, whereas someone with a disability may struggle more with shift work as they may find commuting more difficult and not have the support they require. However even though shift patterns in contact centres vary, and may not be suitable for everyone, the fact that flexible working hours, part time contracts and shift patterns are often common place means that giving people the option to enter that type of work may be a lot more beneficial to certain individuals and may meet their needs.

6. Barriers to disabled employment within the contact centre industry.

In a report that was published by the UK department for working pensions in 2011, after conducting a public consultation and using the East Renfrewshire Disability Action (ERDA) it is stated that there are three main categories of barriers that prevent disabled people participating in society and leading full independent lives are defined as economic, medical and social. The report explains that economic barriers include employment barriers which may exist because of employer attitudes, physical incapacity or lack of educational opportunities. Due to these barriers to employment that can still exist for people with disabilities many disabled individuals rely on benefits such as incapacity benefits or income support and are forced to survive on a low income or even in some situations poverty. Another barrier highlighted in the report related to disabled employment is that employers are often guilty of making the assumption that disabled individuals are less capable to perform, and only note what they cannot do and not what they are able to do. This is a factor that is not only related to employment but also to the whole of society, with people often judging disabled people on what they cannot do and labeling them because of this. The report also explains that there are accessible issues for people with certain disabilities in the whole of society and not just employment, with access to buildings often causing a problem and inaccessible public transport. Medical barriers can also provide an issue for some people with disabilities depending on their specific disability, and this will obviously vary between individuals. The barriers to employment highlighted by this report can all be applied directly to disabled individuals seeking work in the contact centre industry if suitable provisions are not made to compensate for these barriers. As previously mentioned in section 2 and 4 of the report there are government initiatives in place to support both employers and disabled employees make reasonable adjustments in the workplace to accommodate for the disabled individual, which means it is much easier to try and overcome the accessible barriers. Social barriers, such as the employer's attitudes, are much more difficult to overcome and it's something that will need a lot of time and effort put into by the government to change individual's perceptions of disabled employment.

7. Opportunities to create disabled employment within the contact centre industry

Taking into consideration the findings from this report, we can now use this section as a 'what can we do' and look at the activities that are already in place to support people with disabilities into employment in the contact centre industry and what we could do to improve this.

As mentioned in section 2 of this report, there are already government schemes in place to help support people with disabilities into employment such as the 'Access to Work' scheme and the 'Youth Contract – Wage Incentives'. The Access to Work scheme, as mentioned in section 2, provides financial support to the employers to be able to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the workplace that they are required by the UK government to make. The Youth Contract – Wage Incentives scheme is again financial support given to employers when they employ a disadvantaged or disabled young person for at least 26 weeks. As we can see both of these government schemes are financial incentives, and neither focuses on providing additional training or support to a disabled individual to assist them into work. The unemployment figures for the UK in February 2012 showed that only 43.6% of working age disabled people were in employment compared to the 76.4% of working age able bodied individuals. This shows us that there is still a significant gap and possible inequalities between disabled people in work and able bodied people in work and that even though there are schemes in place they are not necessarily the right types of support. Although financial support is clearly a large factor, and making adjustments to a work place to be able to employ a person with a disability can be very expensive, meaning the Access to Work scheme would be very useful, there is a gap in educational support or training provided. Schemes that provide educational support or training to individuals with disabilities would be highly beneficial, especially aspects of training such as confidence building, as we have found in section 6 of the report there are many social misconceptions by the public regarding disabled individuals and this could knock the confidence of the individual. Relating this back to the contact centre industry, both of the government schemes can be used by employers in the contact centre industry so they are relevant there, and general training such as confidence building can also be applicable to working in the contact centre industry.

As mentioned in section 5 of this report, there are training schemes in place in colleges in the UK that relate directly to the skills required to work in the contact centre industry, and these courses are open to any individual whether they suffer with a disability or not, however an individual suffering with an extreme mobility disability may find it a lot more difficult to access the college, especially if they need to use public transport. To overcome this barrier, the courses could be made in an online version so an individual can enrol online and complete the course from home. This would also allow for individuals who require adapted or assistive computer technology, and have access to this on their personal computer to be able to complete the course and the work much more easily. Making the college course more accessible means that people with disabilities have a greater chance to gain the skills required to work in a contact centre environment, and these courses make both disabled individuals and able bodied individuals more employable to the contact centre industry.

We can see in conclusion from all of the research in the report that although there are many barriers still faced by disabled individuals when looking for any kind of employment, including accessibility, technology issues, employer perceptions and social barriers, there are provisions in place in the UK to try and overcome some of these barriers and strengthen then number of disabled individuals in employment. There are numerous different types of adaptive and assistive computer technology, government employer incentives and as we found out the possibility of remote working for contact centre employees. Although there are some provisions in place to support disabled employment, there is still a gap in the training type of support of disabled individuals, and training employers to change their perceptions of disabled employees. This is something which can be worked on across the UK, and hopefully will be used to reduce the number of disabled employees who are out of work. Due to the wide variety of disabilities and the severity of each individual's disability, any training course or package would need to be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of the individual and be accessible for each individual. General training, confidence building and life and employment skills would be skills that are transferable into employment in the contact centre industry.