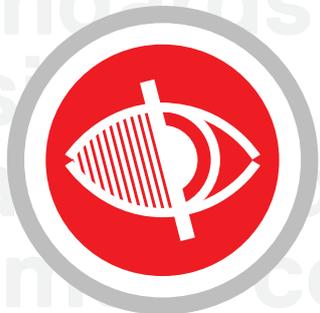


Disability

Rights



Jeremy	Winning
Corbyn	Values

Action for an equal

society for all

“We are fully committed to taking action to create an equal society for all, with everyone able to participate as equal citizens and enabled to live independently. We will not transform society overnight, but working together we can challenge and make real progress in removing the barriers that prevent deaf and disabled people’s full equality.”

There are ten million deaf and disabled people in Britain. Under the Conservative led Coalition - and now Government - the politics of austerity have meant cuts to public services, benefits and a weakening of rights and access to justice. This has thrown the fight for equality into reverse.

Austerity is a political ideology, not an economic necessity, and its implementation has resulted in policies that have created anaemic economic growth and the longest squeeze in living standards, for all but the very wealthiest, since the 1870s. This economic stagnation is experienced as a depression by the overwhelming majority, where the falls in living standards are taking place from unequal starting positions.

Austerity has had a detrimental impact on deaf and disabled people and the ‘Fair Deal for Women’ coalition has highlighted that cuts to benefits - such as the Independent Living Fund and Housing Benefit – and the cuts to social care are “pushing disabled women into poverty at an alarming rate”. The closure of the Independent Living Fund alone deprived 20,000 people of support. In the implementation of cuts the benefit system has been made ever more punitive - in August 2015 the Government finally revealed data that showed nearly 90 people a month were dying after being declared ‘fit for work’ by their Work Capability Assessment. A separate study linked Work Capability Assessments with an additional 590 suicides and an additional 725,000 prescriptions of anti-depressants.

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The carrying through of these measures has been enabled by toxic rhetoric, distortion and the creation of the false widespread belief in high levels of fraud. Disability rights campaigners have linked this to a hardening of public attitudes towards disabled people in recent years and increases in hate crime.

Cuts to benefits have been met with fierce resistance by disabled people and I am proud to have supported the actions of Disabled People Against Cuts and others in opposing these cuts. Significant concessions have been wrung from the Government - including forcing them back on making further cuts to Personal Independence Payments. We must guard against the Government returning to wreak further damage on our benefits system.

We are committed to building a society where everyone can achieve their full potential and disabled people can participate equally as citizens. This will create a better society and a stronger economy – and it is the right thing to do.

We will not transform society overnight, but by working together – and placing equality at the heart of all our policies – we can put Britain on the path to becoming an equal society for all.

Challenging attitudes & removing barriers to an equal society

Deaf and disabled people continue to face barriers – physical, social and attitudinal – in achieving equality and full participation in all areas of society. An approach that recognises disabled people as equal citizens deserving of equality, rather than a problem that needs ‘fixing’ or ‘deserving’ of charity is called the social model of disability. This recognises that it is economic, cultural and social forces that disable people and exclude those with impairments or long term health conditions.

- Removing these barriers and challenging attitudes is necessary to achieve equality. We are committed to working with deaf and disabled people to this end and to continue working with others to strongly oppose to the actions of the Conservatives that have thrown the progress towards equality into reverse.
- The social model of disability is the basis for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which the UK has ratified, We are committed to a Government that fully implements its obligations under the Convention.

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- We will work with Disability Labour, trade unions and others in ensuring that the '12 pillars of independent living' inform Labour policy making – they are; Appropriate and Accessible Information; An adequate income; Appropriate and accessible health and social care provisions; A fully-accessible transport system; Full access to the environment; Adequate provision of technical aids and equipment; Availability of accessible and adapted housing; Adequate provision of personal assistance; Availability of inclusive education and training; Equal opportunities for employment; Availability of independent advocacy and self- advocacy and Availability of peer counselling.

Deaf and disabled people are under-represented in public office and decision making structures across our economy, society and democracy and are rarely portrayed positively in the media or the arts. These exclusions reinforce the popular perception that deaf and disabled people are not really an equal part of society.

The Labour Party itself must ensure that it is a welcome, accessible and inclusive environment for everyone and that we are removing barriers to people becoming involved and represented at every level of our party structures.

- Within the party we have already committed to taking forward the recommendations of the Shami Chakrabarti Inquiry to consult on and introduce a wider Equal Opportunities Policy, training and guidance for members and staff.
- We have also committed to supporting the Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities and creating advisory boards for all equality strands, including disabled people. This will ensure that equality is at the heart of all our policies.

Since last Summer we have turned the political debate around in this country - no longer using language that describes those claiming benefits pejoratively. But negative portrayals, imagery and misrepresentation continue and must be challenged as part of our commitment to changing attitudes.

There is a great deal that can be done here – for example, the Leveson Inquiry made recommendations to allow third party complaints on imagery, portrayal and misrepresentation in the media enabling disabled people and disabled rights organisations to challenge negative representations of deaf and disabled people.

The TUC Disabled Workers Committee has called for media, culture, arts and sports organisations to work with disabled people to agree and monitor standards for the portrayal and representation of disabled people – a call that should be widely supported. We need to increase accessibility to our arts, leisure and sport as spectators and as active participants.

- As part of promoting equality in society and tackling disability hate crime we are committed to the restoration of the 'public sector equality duty' and its extension under a Labour government. This was part of Equality Act 2010 and required organisations with a public function – such as national and local government, education and public transport – to promote equality for all groups.

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- We are committed to opposing the further funding cuts being levied against the Equality and Human Rights Commission which threaten to reduce the total number of legal case-workers who support victims of discrimination to three.
- A British Sign Language Act would give legal recognition to British Sign Language.
- We are committed to a Labour government developing a national training standard with disabled people that can be used by public sector organisations, public services, employers and the police and judiciary to inform, change attitudes and promote equality.
- Disability hate crime must be fully recognised and treated as hate crime, with action taken by police and justice system. The Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry, ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’, into disability-related harassment found that harassment is a commonplace experience for disabled people, “but a culture of disbelief and systemic institutional failures are preventing it from being tackled effectively”. We are committed to a Labour government that tackles hate crime building on the EHRC report recommendations and learning from pilots such as ‘Disability Hate Crime Matters’ in London where the police have worked with disabled people’s organisations to improve the identification, investigation and response to disability hate crime by police and the justice system.

Building public services that support independent living

All of our public services and policies must have at their heart a human rights based approach and social model of disability that enables the full participation and inclusion in society, recognising that deaf and disabled people live independent lives in their local community, workplace, with friends and families and with spontaneity.

To this end we will work to improve the accessibility of public transport – progress is being made but twenty years after the first disability discrimination legislation it is much too slow.

We will continue to oppose the £50 million cuts in funding the Government is making to ‘Access for All’ – halving it over the next four years and leading to the postponement of up to 20 access improvement schemes. Cuts in staffing across the network also mean less assistance for travellers. Since last Summer bringing the railways back under public ownership has become Labour party policy, releasing resources that can be used to improve accessibility.

Rather than cuts we should be pushing forward on increasing the number of platforms with step free access and for measures such as audio-visual announcements for next stop and final

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destinations across our transport network. As part of **putting the public back into our economy and services** we have also committed to increasing democratic and public control over our bus network and protecting rural bus networks.

As part of our **secure homes guarantee** we have committed to building a million new homes in five years, with at least half a million council homes, through our public investment strategy. A Labour government will ensure that this increases the stock of accessible council housing as well as bringing security to the private rented sector by introducing rent controls, secure tenancies and a charter of private tenants' rights, and increase access to affordable home ownership.

This government's cuts have meant that a report in June 2016 reported that schools in England are struggling to support the 1.1 million pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) in mainstream classrooms. Our commitment to developing a **National Education Service for all** includes building an education system that is inclusive.

The deep cuts in local authority funding, and the severe impact of this on social care provision, means that it is not currently meeting the needs of disabled people to live independent lives. **To secure our NHS and social care** we will end the privatisation of our NHS and bring it back into public hands. There is a need for a properly funded care service that delivers dignity and independent living for all and proper employment rights, pay and conditions for care workers.

As well as enabling independent living we will end the current system of Work Capability Assessments and sanctions, developing a new assessment process that is supportive, enabling and not punitive in partnership with disabled representatives and end the privatisation and outsourcing of benefit assessments.

Building an economy

that works for all

We will build an economy that ends the austerity that has harmed deaf and disabled people by investing £500 billion, backed up by a publicly-owned National Investment Bank and regional banks. Investing in infrastructure such as housing and transport with equality at its heart we can grow our economy to everyone's benefit, but by implementing our investment policies to progress equality we can also ensure accessible public transport and housing as highlighted above. We will invest in manufacturing and new industries to move us to a high skilled, high tech, low carbon economy as a key part of our **action to secure our environment**.

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Disabled people continue to experience higher levels of poverty and just 48% of disabled people are in paid employment. Stigma and ignorance mean that only a third of people with mental health issues are in employment.

The Government's approach has been to increase punitive measures against deaf and disabled people and to nurture the insecure, precarious employment that creates a breeding ground for discriminatory practices. The majority can work (sometimes with adjustments) and want to work. It needs the barriers to employment - that are out of the control of individuals - to be removed. This includes discriminatory attitudes, employment and working practices and insufficient employment support.

We are committed to working with deaf and disabled people and trade unions to remove these barriers and to take an approach that is supportive and enables those who can sustain paid employment to do so. Labour has committed to abolishing Tribunal fees as part of removing barriers to people who have experienced discrimination or injustice in employment to access justice.

At the same time, there must be recognition in policy and in the media that some will not be able to sustain employment. They should be supported to live independent lives and enabled to take up voluntary work where possible and they wish to, without being penalised by the benefit system.

With our commitments to full employment and an economy that works for all, security at work, and cutting wealth and income inequality we will:

- remove the cap to Access to Work, increase its promotion and enable assessments and information to be available prior to job interview stage so disabled people know what support is available. The TUC has said it believes the Access to Work fund is cost-effective, and that "increasing its budget would significantly benefit everyone: disabled people, employers, and the government's income from tax". The cap on maximum grants has particularly affected deaf workers who use sign language interpreters.
- strengthen employment and trade union rights, including extending collective bargaining coverage to create more equal workplaces – including rights from day one in a job, such as protection from unfair dismissal – and create statutory rights for trade union Equality Reps. Strong trade unions in the workplace give people a means to enforce their rights at work, and workplaces with effective trade unions have better equality policies and guard against discriminatory work practices that unfairly penalise disabled people.
- reinstate all provisions of the Equality Act, including the obligation of employers to protect workers from third party harassment