

**T O O L B A G**

**FOR**

**SUPPORTING**

**DISABLED**

**TEACHERS**

## **Tool Bag : Supporting Disabled Teachers**

A number of different 'tools' may be useful in supporting disabled teachers.

**Don't forget to ask the disabled member what they want! Disabled people are the experts on disability**

Briefing notes on some of the useful 'tools' are in this 'tool bag'.

**This tool bag contains briefing notes on:**

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Reasonable Adjustments (Extract from DfEE Circular 3.97)
- DfEE Circular 4/99 on fitness to teach
- Access to Work Scheme
- Incapacity Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Teachers' Benevolent Fund

## THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995 : THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED TEACHERS

Here are the relevant sections and provisions of the DDA as it relates to employment.

### The Definition of Disability

The DDA covers people who have, or have had, a disability. A person has a disability according to Section 1 of Act if he has *“a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on his ability to carry out normal, day-to-day activities”*.

Schedule 1 of the Act explains this definition as set out below.

- \* *“Impairment” includes sensory impairments. People with mental illnesses are only covered if their illness is “clinically well-recognised”.*
- \* *“Substantial” is explained as being “more than minor or trivial”.*
- \* *“Long-term” is described as being an effect which has lasted at least twelve months, or is it likely to last for at least twelve months or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected. Long-term effects include those which are likely to recur.*

- \* *“Normal day-to-day activities” are described as involving one of the following broad categories: mobility; manual dexterity; physical coordination; continence; the ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects; speech, hearing or eyesight; memory, or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or perception of the risk of physical danger.*

## Discrimination in Employment

Section 5 of the Act states that discrimination by an employer can occur in two ways.

1. *“An employer discriminates against a disabled person if:*
  - (a) *for a reason which relates to the disabled person’s disability, he treats him less favourably than he treats or would treat others to whom that reason does not or would not apply; and*
  - (b) *he cannot show that the treatment in question is justified”.*
2. *“An employer also discriminates against a disabled pers*
  - (a) *he fails to comply with a section 6 duty [to make reasonable adjustments] imposed on him in relation to the disabled person; and*

*(b) he cannot show that his failure to comply with that duty is justified”.*

## The Duty of Reasonable Adjustment

Section 6 of the Act states that employers have a duty “*to take such steps as it is reasonable*” to change the physical features of the workplace and employment arrangements so that a disabled person is not at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. Section 6 gives examples of steps which an employer may have to take in order to comply with the duty of reasonable adjustment. These include making adjustments to premises, altering working hours, acquiring or modifying equipment and providing a reader or interpreter.

## Aspects of employment covered by the DDA

The DDA applies to disabled applicants for employment and to disabled employees. Employers must not discriminate against disabled people in recruitment and retention, promotion and transfer, training and development, other benefits and in termination of employment.

Section 8 of the Act states that a person who believes that an employer has unlawfully discriminated or failed to make a reasonable adjustment may make a complaint to an industrial tribunal.

## Victimisation

Section 55 of the DDA makes it unlawful to victimise disabled people who make use of, or try to make use of their rights under the Act. People who help disabled people to complain about discrimination are also protected.

## Registered Disabled People

Although the DDA abolishes the employment quota for disabled people, people on the register of disabled people (green card holders) are covered by the Act for three years if their name appeared on the register as disabled both on 12 January 1995 and on 2 December 1996. After this three year period, such people are deemed to have had a disability in the past (see below).

The National Union of Teachers recommends that because of the loss of the employment quota, the recruitment process should include a guaranteed interview for any disabled applicant who meets the selection criteria.

## Past Disabilities

The DDA protects people who have had a disability in the past. If a person once had a disability which is covered by the Act they are still protected even if they have recovered.

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

(Extract from DfEE Circular 3/97: “What the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 means for schools and LEAs”)

### **EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS WHICH GOVERNING BODIES AND LEAs MIGHT REASONABLY HAVE TO MAKE ARE:**

- \* **altering premises**, e.g. widening a doorway, providing a ramp, stair-climbing chairs or non-slip flooring, moving classroom or corridor furniture, altering lighting, or providing parking spaces for disabled drivers;
  
- \* **allocating some duties to another employee**, e.g. asking a non-disabled teacher to assemble a slide projector and screen for a disabled teacher, providing ancillary support in the classroom, arranging supervision may be more appropriate than playground supervision for a disabled teacher;

- \* **transferring the person to fill an existing vacancy**, e.g. if a teacher becomes disabled and there is no reasonable adjustment which can enable them to continue in their post they might be considered for another suitable teaching post. In the case of LEA maintained schools, the LEA may be able to recommend the teacher for a suitable vacancy at another school;
- \* **altering working hours**, e.g. allowing an employee who becomes disabled to work part-time or to job share or making adjustments to the timetable;
- \* **changing the person's place of work**, e.g. ensuring that a teacher with mobility difficulties which prevents them from using the stairs can hold all of their lessons in classrooms on the ground floor;
- \* **allowing absences during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment**, e.g. allowing an employee who becomes disabled time off during work to receive physiotherapy or other treatment;
- \* **supplying additional training**; e.g. training in the use of particular pieces of equipment unique to the disabled person or re-training a teacher in a new subject area in order for them to continue teaching;

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**acquiring or making changes to equipment**, e.g. providing an induction loop in the school hall and other assembly areas, providing magnifying facilities, a pager that vibrates, a visible fire alarm system, or an adapted telephone; or

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**providing a reader or signer**, e.g. reading information to a visually impaired person at particular times during the working day.

## **NUT BRIEFING NOTES ON DfEE CIRCULAR 4/99 : PHYSICAL AND MENTAL FITNESS TO TEACH OF TEACHERS AND OF ENTRANTS TO INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING**

- . DfEE Circular 4/99, 'Physical and Mental Fitness to Teach of Teachers and of Entrants to Initial Teacher Training', replaced DES Circular 1/88 and DfE Circular 13/93. Thanks to NUT pressure, Circular 4/99 is much more positive and encouraging than 1/88 and refers to the important contribution which can be made by the employment of disabled teachers.
- . The circular states, in paragraph B.2.1:

“Disabled staff can make an important contribution to the overall school curriculum, both as effective employees and in raising the aspirations of disabled pupils and educating non-disabled people about the reality of disability. Many disabled people will be medically fit to teach, though employers may have to make reasonable adjustments under the DDA to enable disabled people to carry out their duties effectively.”

- . There is a welcome statement in paragraph 6 that:
  - “A person’s physical capacity to manage his or her work may be enhanced with appropriate technical or human support and advice from such experts as the Employment Service Disability Service, as well as institutional arrangements.”
- . The statutory basis for Circular 4/99 is found in the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1993, as amended, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. No teacher can be appointed to “relevant employment” unless his or her employers are satisfied that he or she has the necessary health and physical capacity.
- . Under Regulation 9, a teacher cannot continue in “relevant employment” if his or her employer is satisfied that he or she does not have the necessary health or physical capacity.
- . “Relevant employment” means employment (which includes engagement not under a contract of employment, for instance as a supply teacher) of the following types:
  - employment by a Local Education Authority, as a teacher (either at a school or further education provider) or as a worker with children or young people;

- employment (whoever the employer is) as a teacher at a maintained school, a non-maintained special school, a further education institution which is either maintained by a Local Education Authority or is in the further education sector and, until 1 September 1999, at a grant-maintained school; and
- employment by the governing body of a maintained school, a non-maintained special school or a further education provider or until 1 September 1999 at a grant-maintained school as a worker with children or young people.

A worker with children or young people means a person whose work brings them into regular contact with children and young people under 19.

- . Under Regulation 10 and 10(A) of the Education (Teachers) Regulations, the Secretary of State has the power to bar or restrict the employment of teachers on medical grounds.
- . Routine medical examination of all prospective students is not required. All candidates who have been offered a firm or conditional place on a course of initial teacher training are required to complete a declaration of health questionnaire before committing themselves to a course leading directly to qualified teacher status.

## Physical and Mental Fitness to Teach on Entry or Re-entry to Teaching

- . Regulations 8 and 9 of the Education (Teachers) Regulations require that a Local Education Authority or governing body must not appoint anyone to, or continue to employ them in, relevant employment unless he or she has the health and physical capacity for such employment.
- . The National Union of Teachers has expressed its view to the DfEE that, if there is any doubt about a teacher's capacity to teach, the employer should set up a professional panel on which practising teachers, including disabled teachers, are represented. This should be a role for the General Teaching Council.
- . The National Union of Teachers is concerned that the draft circular conveys the impression that the opinion of the medical adviser is the sole determining factor in the decision-making process.
- . DfEE Circular 4/99 states:

“If the medical adviser to the prospective employer considers that a specialist opinion is necessary, the applicant may be offered the opportunity to choose a specialist on the advice of their GP or the medical adviser may propose a specialist with the agreement of the applicant. An applicant who does not agree with the recommendation of the prospective employer’s medical adviser may seek

another specialist's opinion, again guided by his or her GP. The employer's medical adviser should consider in the light of any such second opinion, whether his or her previous advice should be revised. The decision on whether to accept such an applicant on grounds of medical fitness rests with the employer."

- . The circular says that, in the case of newly-qualified teachers, the prospective employer's medical adviser should obtain details of the applicant's medical history from the medical adviser to the training provider, with the written consent of the teacher. In most cases, this information will be confined to the pre-course declaration of health questionnaire.
- . When teachers change school, the circular advises that no appointment should be confirmed until the employer is satisfied that a teacher has the health and physical capacity to teach. The employer must also consider whether reasonable adjustment would enable a disabled candidate to work effectively. The employer's medical adviser may consider medical records from previous employment. Prospective employers must obtain the teacher's consent before requesting medical information from a previous employer.

### Teachers who become Medically Incapable in Service

- . Circular 4/99 points out the responsibility of the governing body or headteacher to take any emergency action when they have reasons to think that a teacher may have become medically incapable of performing teaching duties if this may put at risk the health and safety of the pupils.
  
- . The circular contains the welcome statement, however, that “many teachers who become disabled through illness or injury can continue to carry out their duties effectively if the employer makes reasonable adjustments. Advice is available from Circular 3/97, relevant disability organisations and from the Employment Service’s Disability Service Teams, who administer the ‘Access to Work’ programme, and can be contacted at local Job Centres.” This statement was added following pressure from the NUT.
  
- . Teachers who are unable to continue working because of illness or injury can apply for ill-health retirement benefits under the Teachers’ Pension Scheme if they are members of the Scheme. A teacher has to be permanently incapable of teaching to qualify for ill-health benefits.
  
- . Teachers may not be appointed to relevant employment while they are receiving any ill-health benefits awarded after 31 March 1997.
  
- . The NUT appreciates that it is the intention of the regulations to restrict those in receipt of ill-health retirement benefits from undertaking further

teaching. The current provisions, however, prevent also former teachers from undertaking posts outside the teaching profession where they would come into contact with children, such as classroom assistant, nursery nurse, librarian, school secretary or school crossing supervisor.

- . The circular points out, also, that where the issue of suspension or dismissal of a teacher on medical grounds arises, under Regulation 9 of the Teachers' Regulations, the employer must give the teacher concerned the opportunity to submit medical and other evidence and to make representations and must consider such evidence and representations.

### Monitoring Staff Sickness Absence

- . The NUT has pointed out to the DfEE that:

“Although there is no evidence of widespread abuse of sick leave arrangements among teachers, many LEAs have recommended that schools introduce such procedures. Such procedures can be abused by employers and be discriminatory in themselves.”

Although the circular refers to consultation with staff in drawing up clear procedures, the NUT has concerns about this section of the circular.

## **APPENDIX 1 : GUIDANCE TO MEDICAL ADVISERS**

1. Appendix 1 advises medical advisers to classify each candidate in one of three categories.
2. The three categories (a)-(c) are virtually identical to those used in the 1988 Circular. The NUT has repeatedly stated its concerns that one person's subjective judgement could place an applicant in category (c). Even a (b) would raise considerable doubts in the minds of admission tutors in institutions of initial teacher education.

## ACCESS TO WORK

### HELP FOR DISABLED WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS

#### NUT BRIEFING NOTES

Access to Work is a Government scheme which was introduced in 1994, bringing together a range of services available to people with disabilities and their employers.

#### What Access to Work Offers

- \* Communicators for people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.
- \* A part-time reader or assistance at work for a blind worker.
- \* Equipment or adaptations to existing equipment to suit individual needs.
- \* Adaptations to a car, or taxi fares or other transport costs for someone who cannot use public transport to get to work.
- \* Alterations to premises or to the working environment so that an employee with a disability can work there.

Access to work is intended to be flexible to suit each person's needs in their particular job. It may be possible to have help with items not included in the above list.

### How to find out more

Placement, assessment and counselling teams (PACTs) can advise on the different kinds of help available under Access to Work. The local PACT can also provide advice to employers on recruiting people with disabilities. The PACT number is listed in the telephone directory under 'Employment Service'.

### The NUT's Role

The NUT, together with the TUC and disability organisations, campaigned to save Access to Work when it was frozen in 1995. As a result, the 1996 budget for Access to Work was increased.

### The Employer's Contribution

There is a mandatory employer contribution for support for people in employment.

Employers of people already employed when they apply for Access to Work will be expected to meet all costs up to £300 and 20 per cent of costs up to £10,000 for the first year. The Employment Service will meet the remaining 80 per cent of costs between £300 and £10,000 and all costs above £10,000.

The £300 threshold does not apply in the second and subsequent years.

## The Arrangements in Detail

Unemployed disabled people		100 per cent of approved costs to be met by Access to Work
Travel to work costs		100 per cent of approved costs to be met by Access to Work
Communicator support at interviews		100 per cent of approved costs to be met by Access to Work
Other support for disabled people in employment.		<u>Year 1</u> AtW will meet up to 80 per cent of approved costs above a costs threshold of £300 and 100 per cent of all

		such costs in excess of £10,000.
		<u>Years 2 &amp; 3</u> AtW will meet up to 80 per cent of approved costs and 100v per cent of all such costs in excess of £10,000. (There is no £300 costs threshold in years 2 & 3)

### Time Limit

Where a commitment is made to provide ongoing Access to Work support, this will be for a maximum of three years. The Employment Service will review cases requiring longer term support.

# **INCAPACITY BENEFIT AND THE ALL-WORK TEST**

## **INCAPACITY BENEFIT**

Incapacity Benefit (IB) is a benefit for people unable to work because of illness or disability. It replaced Sickness Benefit and Invalidity Benefit from April 1995. Applicants must have paid enough National Insurance contributions to qualify. Incapacity Benefit is not a means-tested benefit so the amount received does not depend on income or savings. It can be claimed by people who have taken early retirement and who are below the State pension age.

Incapacity Benefit is paid at three rates depending on the length of time an applicant has been unable to work.

- \* Short-term lower rate is paid for the first 28 weeks of incapacity (if the claimant is not entitled to statutory sick pay).
- \* Short-term higher rate is paid from week 29 to week 52.
- \* Long-term rate is paid after 52 weeks.

The short-term higher rate and the long-term rate are taxable.

People who were receiving Sickness or Invalidity Benefit before 13 April 1995 were transferred automatically onto Incapacity Benefit.

## THE ALL WORK TEST

The All Work Test decides whether an applicant is unable to work and thus be eligible for Incapacity benefit.

After about six months of receiving Statutory Sick Pay or short-term Incapacity Benefit, applicants are required to fill in an All Work test questionnaire which is assessed by an adjudication officer in deciding whether the claimant is fit for any work. (It is not a test of fitness to teach).

The AW questionnaire asks claimants to tick boxes which most closely match how difficult they find it to perform certain activities. These activities are walking, walking up and down stairs, sitting, rising from sitting, standing, bending and kneeling, manual dexterity, lifting and carrying, reaching, speech, hearing, vision, continence and remaining conscious.

Under each of these activities is a list of related tasks of varying degrees of difficulty. These tasks are called 'descriptors'. The descriptors are ranked so that within each activity there is a threshold at which the claimant is found to be incapable of work and thus passes the test and a lower threshold at

which it is judged that the effects of claimant's conditions begin to impair their ability to work.

For example, under the activity of walking are seven descriptors ranging from 'cannot walk at all' to 'no walking problem'. If the claimant cannot walk more than 50 metres they are above the threshold and pass the test. If they cannot walk more than 800 metres this is below the lower threshold and is judged to have no effect on the claimant's ability to work. If walking ability lies somewhere in the middle, this will not be enough to pass the test but can be combined with the claimant's ability under other activities to bring them above the qualifying threshold.

The questionnaire does not tell claimants where the threshold lies. A points system is used by the DSS to determine whether the claimant passes the test. Each descriptor is allocated a fixed number of points, ranging from 0 to 15 points. These points are not shown on the questionnaire. To pass the test a score of at least 15 points is needed. Points are added together from the descriptor with the highest score which applies under each activity. Only the highest score from the two activities 'walking' and 'walking up and down stairs' may be counted, together with one descriptor for each other activity.

## FILLING IN THE ALL WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

The following information may be helpful when advising members.

Pain and discomfort are often chronic aspects of a disabled person's life and people with disabilities often learn to minimise this within their everyday life. As a result they may fail to highlight pain or discomfort within their answers to questions on the AW test, whereas someone else who has been more recently confronted with similar pain (and thus more conscious of it while answering the AW test) may highlight their discomfort more significantly and pass the test.

Claimants should try not to over estimate their ability to carry out the tasks listed in the questionnaire. They should focus on their problems and difficulties rather than how they deal with those difficulties.

## **DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE**

### **What is Disability Living Allowance?**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit for disabled people (children and adults) who may need help in looking after themselves and at people who find it difficult to walk or get around.

DLA is tax free and is not means-tested. It is paid on top of any earnings or other income.

DLA is divided into two parts:

- a care component - for help with personal care needs, paid at three different levels; and
- a mobility component - for help with walking difficulties, paid at two levels.

Either component can be paid on its own or both components can be paid at the same time.

It is not necessary to have a carer in order to receive DLA.

### **How could DLA help NUT Members?**

Disabled teachers may be eligible for DLA while they are teaching. DLA may be worth investigating as a means of support for disabled members.

## How to qualify for DLA

To qualify for DLA, a disabled person must pass a series of non-disability tests as well as satisfying at least one of the disability tests.

The non-disability tests relate to age, qualifying period, residence and other factors.

The disability tests are different for the care component and for the mobility component.

## How can the DLA be spent?

A disabled person who qualifies for DLA can spend it on anything he or she wishes, e.g. taxi fares, car expenses, equipment.

## How to find out more

The DLA is a complicated benefit.

A claim can be started off by a free telephone call to the benefit enquiry line (BEL) on 0800 882200.

The BEL will send a claim form and the claim can be backdated to the date of the call.

The forms completion service, on 0800 441144, will complete the form over the telephone on behalf of the applicant and then send out the completed form for checking and signature.

# **The Teachers' Benevolent Fund**

**Don't forget the TBF!!**

The Teachers' Benevolent Fund is run by teachers, for teachers.

The TBF was established in 1877 to help widows and orphans of teachers.

To keep up-to-date with the changing needs of the teaching profession, the scope of the TBF's work has grown enormously. The TBF helps hundreds of teachers and lecturers in England and Wales each year. It offers financial assistance to members and retired members of the profession in genuine need and to their dependants.

The TBF's work includes helping teachers with disabilities to buy equipment such as electric wheelchairs, swivel car seats or stairlifts.

## **DISABILITY EQUALITY**

### **BACKGROUND PAPER: THE WORK OF THE NUT**

The NUT is committed to promoting equality for disabled teachers in the profession and for disabled members within Union. Some of the Union's work in fulfilling this commitment is set out below:

- \*1988: Investigation of LEA practices in meeting their quotas in the employment of disabled teachers.
- \*1988: Union survey on the needs of disabled members and the discrimination they may face.
- \*1989: Annual Conference resolutions to support the rights of disabled teachers and incorporate equal opportunities for such teachers as a priority at national and local level.
- \*1989: NUT Working Party on Disability established.
- \*1990: Discussion document on teachers with disabilities circulated to NUT divisions and associations.
- \*1990: First national NUT Conference on disability.
- \*1991: Publication of "Disability - An Equal Opportunities Issue", containing the Union's draft guidelines on disability.

- \*1991: TUC Disability Forum is established and meets three times a year. The NUT is represented.
- \*1991: Second national conference on disability to launch the Union's guidelines.
- \*1992: National joint conference with RADAR, "Forward Together: Teachers with Disabilities".
- \*1993: Launch of the NUT termly bulletin "Equality", to include issues of concern to disabled teachers.
- \*1993: Union lobbying ensured positive changes to the Government's Circular on "Medical Fitness to Teach".
- \*1994: Sign language interpreters present at Annual Conference for first time.
- \*1995: NUT support for the national campaign for civil rights legislation for people with disabilities.
- \*1996: NUT involvement in the successful campaign to save the 'Access to Work' scheme.
- \*1996: Co-ordinated response to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 with regular briefings and guidance to Headquarters' departments, NUT regional and Wales offices.
- \*1996: Five circulars of guidance on disability equality issued to local associations and divisions as well as information to individual members.

- \*1997: A new training course 'Disability: A Matter of Equality', aimed at local officers, was held at Stoke Rochford.
- \*1997: NUT secures positive additions to DfEE circular of guidance to schools and LEAs about the Disability Discrimination Act.
- \*1997: A Conference of Disabled Members was held, providing a valuable forum for members to discuss their concerns.
- \*1998: Second 'Disability : A Matter of Equality' course held.
- \*1998: NUT submits evidence to the Government's Select Committee Inquiry into the Employment of Disabled People, emphasising the value of disabled teachers in the profession.
- \*1998: NUT represented at first TUC/National League of Blind and Disabled Conference.
- \*1998: NUT/Scope 'Within Reach' campaign secures an additional £22 million for the Schools Access Initiative for 1999-2000.
- \*1999: 'Disability : A Matter of Equality' now established as an annual course.
- \*1999: NUT represented at second TUC/NLBD Conference.

- \*1999: NUT collaborates with SKILL on its project to encourage young disabled people into teaching.
- \*1999: Further guidance circulated to local associations and divisions about the Union's duties under the DDA.
- \*1999: Reconstitution of the Executive's Working Party on Disabilities with a wider panel of lay members.
- \*1999: NUT affiliates nationally to the Trade Union Disability Alliance.
- \*1999: NUT makes a detailed submission to the Disability Rights Task Force about the extension of the DDA in relation to school education.
- \*1999: NUT's Tool Bag for Supporting Disabled Members is updated.

## **EXPERIENCES OF DISABLED TEACHERS**

“I became the first deaf headteacher to be appointed this century. Technology has advanced to the extent that communication problems are now less severe. The provision of interpreters helps at meetings. There is still a need for deaf awareness programmes in education because discrimination and prejudice are alive and well.”  
**(deaf teacher)**

“I receive little assistance from senior management; my office (I am head of year) is in a different block from my teaching room. There are no ramps and no banisters (I use a wheelchair for long distances). The Deputy Head suggested that I should work part-time, although I have only had three days off this year. PACT is supposed to be helping; I have waited 9 months so far.” **(teacher with multiple sclerosis)**

“In my present position everyone takes my disability as part of me. I cannot get promotion to a deputy headship; I am for some reason always second! My disability, I believe.” **(teacher with calliper)**

“I became profoundly hearing-impaired at 24 years old. I was working at a Husbandry Farm as an Assistant Scientific Officer. I decided to retrain and qualified as a teacher of the deaf in 1987. I have since been employed by Humberside LEA. For the initial two years I was a teacher in a small unit attached to a primary school. I was then promoted to head of a newly formed unit in another primary school. Most of the time the LEA and the school staff have met me with positive and helpful attitudes to my impairments. Obviously, there are grey areas but with the support of the NUT I always feel I am and will be backed in any areas that may have potential to cause problems.”

**(deaf teacher)**

“I teach (job share) in a very lively city centre middle school. My experiences are generally very positive; help is always on offer if required. Alterations to the building have given improved access and suitable toilet facilities. I am able with some help (display boards, etc) to function in the classroom as well as other members of staff. Staff, parents, school and children are brilliant! Very positive!”

**(teacher who uses a wheelchair)**

“I had a leg amputated when I was six. In general, I have found other staff in schools supportive of me. I once had the experience of my metal foot dropping off when I was walking down a corridor but this has never happened in front of a class!” **(teacher with an artificial leg)**



“I have been partially sighted since birth. I was educated in mainstream school, teacher training college and universities. I taught in mainstream primary schools for 30 years and then qualified as a teacher of visually impaired children. I was head of a service for visually impaired children for 7 years. I am now retired after 43 years in education. There was no tangible resource support at any time but a good deal of personal support from the LEA.”

**(partially sighted teacher)**

“When I first started teaching I felt the need to hide my impairment and stress on application forms that it did not affect my teaching at all. I have, however, always talked to pupils about my disability and now recognise how vital it is to promote the positive roles disabled pupils and teachers can play in schools. Over the years I have grown tired of the discrimination I face in various areas of my life and have come to identify myself as someone disabled by the mind set of the vast majority of society. I am disabled by inaccessible buildings and systems - a situation which can only be effectively addressed through ensuring the full civil rights of disabled people.”

**(teacher with cerebral palsy)**

“Following problems with my back, I have used a wheelchair since 1990. In my experience, teaching from a wheelchair is not difficult although bureaucracy can create difficulties. Pupils tend to be refreshingly direct and ask me all sorts of questions about my life. I must say, however, that I would think twice about entering teaching now, with an existing disability.” **(teacher who uses a wheelchair)**

“I survived polio at a young age and realised I was “different” at the age of six. Initially, I was rejected by my local school and my parents kept me at home until they reluctantly agreed to send me to a special school. Later, I went to a local secondary modern school and then to university. As a teacher, I became very active with the NUT and it was only when I returned to teaching that I became more aware of disability issues. I realised that disability was not being addressed in the way race and gender were. I see the treatment of disabled people as a form of oppression that must be tackled for the benefit of future generations.”  
**(teacher who is a polio survivor)**