

# PM launches new drive to tackle barriers faced by disabled people

Injustices faced by disabled people in the workplace, at home and in the community will be tackled head-on through a new package of measures ordered by the Prime Minister.

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## PM launches new drive to tackle barriers faced by disabled people

Higher accessibility standards for new housing, an overhaul of statutory sick pay, and greater workplace support are part of renewed efforts to ensure disabled people can fully participate in society.

New national outcomes data for disabled people will also be published, shining a light on injustices and driving action to tackle barriers they face.

With around a fifth of the working age population living with a disability, the Prime Minister has also announced a new cross-government disability team.

Incorporating the Office for Disability Issues, the new team will sit alongside the Government Equalities Office and Race Disparity Unit in a new Equalities Hub at the heart of government.

This team will work closely with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities to develop a new approach to disability, with their views and experiences at the forefront of any new policy. Further measures will be set out later this year.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

My determination to identify and tackle injustices, wherever they exist in society, remains as strong as ever.

So I am proud to announce new measures to break down barriers faced by disabled people, whether in employment, housing or elsewhere.

"We all have a crucial role – businesses, government and civil society – in working together to ensure that disabled people get the support they need, and go as far as their talents can take them.

Recognising that too many disabled people still live in unsuitable homes, the

Government will consult on mandating higher accessibility standards for new housing.

This could help deliver up to 300,000 new accessible and adaptable homes every year. Guidance will also be published to help councils meet current standards for accessible housing in England.

A consultation on new measures to help employers better support disabled people and those with long-term health conditions in work will also be published next month.

These include reforming Statutory Sick Pay so it is better enforced, more flexible to encourage a phased return to work, and covers the lowest paid.

The Government will also consult on offering small and medium employers a conditional rebate to support those who manage staff on sickness absence and help them get back to work.

The Work and Pensions Secretary will also explore how to improve support for those on disability benefits through a Green Paper, for which her department will engage extensively with disabled people's organisations and charities.

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Disabled people encounter too many challenges in life and I want to see these end.

We want to change the landscape for disabled people and to make sure there is always a level playing field for them.

Because all of us need an equal chance to live a life of opportunity and fulfilment.

We intend to support disabled people in all phases of their life so that the pursuit of equality is a shared goal.

Other proposals include:

- New employee rights to request workplace modifications on health grounds
- New metrics to compare how well companies deliver for disabled customers in essential markets, such as energy, broadband and water.
- New research to ensure disabled people are at the heart of future Government policy, to be published early next year.

Richard Kramer, Chief Executive for the disability charity Sense, said:

Today's announcement is a significant one for disabled people, and addressing the inequalities they face.

For too long now, disability policy has been focused on what benefits or services disabled people do or don't access, rather

than the lives they want, and have a right to lead.

Equality for disabled people is everyone's business and cuts across all areas of policy and life, which is why we have been calling for and welcome this new cross government approach.

We know that today is just the beginning of the journey, but we look forward to working with the government as this work takes shape, and ensuring it is led by and centres around disabled people to truly deliver meaningful change.

Mark Hodgkinson, Chief Executive at disability equality charity Scope, said:

Continued action from government to tackle the barriers Britain's 14 million disabled people face is welcome.

Making workplaces more flexible, improving market regulation and government coordination are positive steps in the right direction.

We know that half of disabled people feel excluded from society [1], and are too often shut out of work. Life also costs more if you are disabled, and Scope research shows that these costs add up to on average £583 a month [2].

We have long-called for a concerted effort from government to improve the lives of disabled people in this country. It is therefore positive to see recognition from government that a joined up approach is needed and necessary.

David Isaac, Equality and Human Rights Commission Chair, said

The barriers experienced by disabled people in their everyday lives are unique. We have long said that addressing key issues such as housing and secure employment so disabled people can live independently in their communities requires a joined-up strategy.

The creation of a cross-government team to coordinate disability policy is a bold statement from the government to tackle these problems and a very welcome move.

It will help ensure the views of disabled people are better represented at the heart of government and will create a more coherent approach to improve the daily lives of millions of disabled people across the country.

We look forward to working closely with government to improve the experiences of disabled people in all areas of life.

Mike Cherry, FSB National Chairman, said:

Everyone in our society deserves the opportunity to thrive. For all of our members who employ themselves and others with disabilities, the right Government support is crucial.

It's good to see Government consulting on an SSP rebate and support in accessing occupational health as part of a comprehensive package, showing the Government is serious in backing small businesses and the self-employed to do more of what they do best – using everybody's talents to provide the jobs and wealth our communities thrive on.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Every person, whatever their ability or age, must have the opportunity to succeed in life – that means providing new homes that meet the everyday needs of whoever lives in them.

However, too many of the homes built in the past have not lived up to this basic promise, which is why we're looking very closely at strengthening accessibility requirements, including making them mandatory for all new homes.

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## **Tackling childhood obesity: £1.5 million funding for local projects**

Five local councils with forward-thinking ideas to address childhood obesity will receive funding.

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## **Tackling childhood obesity: £1.5 million funding for local projects**

Five local councils will be awarded £100,000 a year over a 3-year period. The funding will help them to test and refine their ideas for addressing childhood obesity and health inequalities. The councils are:

- Bradford
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Nottinghamshire
- Lewisham

- Birmingham

The Department of Health and Social Care, the Local Government Association and Public Health England (PHE) are supporting the councils to trial new programmes in their areas, which could help shape future national policy.

Planned programmes include a scheme by Birmingham City Council to offer health, food, nutrition and physical-activity focused apprenticeships for 15 to 19 year olds in deprived areas, where obesity rates are highest.

The council will also create a local metric, the 'Birmingham Basket', to capture local consumer habits. This will help inform policies and measure impact.

Bradford will partner with local mosques to support South Asian children – who are at a greater risk of obesity – by providing places and fun ways to exercise, alongside healthier food.

Blackburn and Darwen council will work with local restaurants and takeaways to improve menus and incentivise healthier options. This scheme will look at ways to work with outlets to adopt healthier options, for example through free waste removal, subsidised advertising on council-owned estates and a potential health food hub.

These programmes will help the government to consider further steps that could be taken to enable local action on childhood obesity.

The work is part of [the Trailblazer programme](#) and the [second chapter of the government's childhood obesity plan](#), which was launched last year.

Public Health Minister Seema Kennedy said:

Every child deserves the best start in life – communities need to come together to play their part in helping the next generation to be healthy and active. Prevention is at the heart of our NHS Long Term Plan, but a one-size-fits-all approach does not work in public health.

These pilots are rightly rooted in the needs of the communities they serve and I look forward to seeing what benefits this grassroots approach has on our nation's obesity problem.

Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at PHE, said:

While obesity has no quick fix, these trailblazers are forging innovative solutions that clearly prioritise children and their long-term health.

From expert local knowledge, to local authority intervention, community support and government action, we all have crucial roles

to play in combating obesity.

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## Homes England and Barclays strike loan deals worth over £150m to speed up the delivery of new homes

- 660 new homes to be built in Wimbledon and Southampton.
- The loans, worth £155.3m, are the first deals to be agreed under the £1bn Housing Delivery Fund

Housing Minister Kit Malthouse MP will today announce that the government's housing accelerator, Homes England, and Barclays have agreed £155.3 million of loan funding to accelerate the construction of hundreds of new homes in Wimbledon and Southampton.

The news will be announced today during the Housing Minister's keynote speech at the Chartered Institute of Housing's 2019 conference in Manchester.

The deals are the first to be agreed from the £1bn Housing Delivery Fund, which was announced by the Communities Secretary, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP and former Barclays Chairman John McFarlane, in September last year.

In Wimbledon, a total of £150 million will be loaned to Merton Catalyst LLP, a joint venture between housing association Catalyst and developer Galliard. The funding will be used to help bring forward 604 apartments on the hybrid residential-led scheme at the former Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium site in Plough Lane. This sophisticated, mixed-use development will also include commercial space, improved public realm and a new sports stadium delivered by AFC Wimbledon.

In Southampton, Cannon Capital Developments will receive a £5.3 million loan to convert a former commercial building into 56 apartments for private sale in the city's Ogle Road.

The Housing Delivery Fund was set up between the government and Barclays Corporate Banking to provide £1 billion of loan finance to open up the housing market and help small and medium-sized developers to deliver new homes across the country.

Minister of State for Housing, Kit Malthouse MP, said:

"Upping our game to build more, better and faster is how we are going to meet our ambition of delivering 300,000 homes a year by the middle of the next decade.

“Innovations are key to unlocking the next generation of homes and our Housing Delivery Fund – a £1 billion partnership between Government and Barclays – is a great example of the new approaches we’re taking to get more homes out the starting blocks.

“Today I am announcing the first two deals from this partnership, worth £155 million, that will see sites developed into communities that people will be proud to call home.”

Sir Edward Lister, Chairman of Homes England, said:

“We promised to form new, innovative partnerships to shake up the housing market and do things differently to accelerate the delivery of new homes across the country, and this partnership with Barclays is doing just that.

“This is a real milestone moment as we announce the first loan deals to come to fruition, which will see new housing be delivered in two areas where it is needed most.”

Dennis Watson, Head of Real Estate at Barclays Corporate Banking, said:

“We recognised the need to get financing to smaller and medium-sized developers to help increase the number of quality homes being constructed. That’s why we set up the Housing Delivery Fund with Homes England – to ensure projects like this could become a reality. Hundreds of homes, including affordable housing, are now on their way but we know there is still more to do.

“Whether it’s a smaller conversion in Southampton or a larger regeneration scheme in Wimbledon, Barclays stands ready to help our housebuilders deliver more new homes more quickly.”

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