

Business are missing out on the skills people like Nath have to offer – Eluned Morgan

The Minister told them about Nath, from Rhondda Cynon Taf, who is on the autistic spectrum and has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. He has found work that suits his skills with help from the Welsh Government's EU funded Communities for Work programme. He is a fluent Welsh speaker and has the ability to translate documents quite easily but struggles in social situations. His Communities for Work adviser helped him to pursue a Welsh translation job and, after some intensive cooperation, he secured work with the *Autism Directory Society*.

With the help of the Society and his adviser, he secured financial help from the DWP's Access to Work programme, as well as the support of an Access to Work Coach for 3 years, which consequently is helping him retain the role he is in. With the vital support of Access to Work, he is trying different approaches and keeping positive, hoping to overcome the frustrations he has had with social communications.

The Minister was addressing the Launch of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's Public Policy Forum where she told delegates:

"There are not enough disabled people in work. Figures released just last week show that the proportion of disabled people who are able to work but who are unemployed in Great Britain is 9.2% – more than twice the proportion of those who are not disabled, which is currently 3.6%.

"Meanwhile, in Wales, just 45% of working-age disabled people are currently in employment, compared to 79% of those who are not disabled. This is not acceptable. It is something I want to see change and I need your help to achieve it.

"This isn't a purely altruistic process. If you aren't employing a wide cross section of society, you're missing out on the untapped potential of our highly skilled workforce."

Earlier this year the Welsh Government's Employability Plan was launched. It recognises that some people experience barriers which prevent them entering work.

One of the main actions in the plan is to provide an individualised approach to employability support that is responsive to an individual's needs and takes account of personal circumstances, barriers, aptitudes and ambitions. Ensuring there are opportunities for disabled people to find and stay in work is a key element of this. The plan calls on businesses to address barriers to

work by adapting job descriptions and using innovative recruitment processes.

The Minister added:

“We don’t expect you to do this without guidance and support. Employability is not just about jobs and skills. It is about getting every aspect of Government policy – education, health, housing and communities – working together to support people into sustainable jobs. But Government cannot, and should not, do this alone. We need employers, businesses and professionals like you, to support us.”