**Proposal:**

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Eye Health and Visual Impairment has launched an inquiry into employer attitudes and the employment of blind and partially sighted people.

**Background**

At present, only one in four registered blind and partially sighted people of working age are in employment.

In November 2023, the APPG commissioned YouGov to carry out a poll on employer attitudes. Some of the findings include:

* 48% of businesses surveyed didn’t have accessible recruitment processes.
* 47% didn’t know where to find funding to help cover the extra costs of practical support for employees who are blind or partially sighted, such as the government’s Access to Work Scheme.
* Most shockingly, 25% of respondents said they would not be willing to make workplace adaptations and adjustments in order to employ a blind or partially sighted person.

Understanding employer attitudes is essential to tackling and removing some of the barriers that currently exist which prevent blind and partially sighted people from securing decent, well-paid, and secure work.

Employer attitudes have also been cited as a factor for blind and partially sighted employees not feeling supported to stay in work after a diagnosis, or a deterioration in their sight.

The YouGov poll shows that misconceptions and myths about visually impaired people’s ability to work still exist.

The polling has also illustrated that there is a lack of awareness and take up of government employment support schemes such as Access to Work, along with some businesses not fully understanding their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

**The Inquiry**

The Inquiry aims to:

* Better understand the impact that attitudes and barriers have on the likelihood of a blind or partially sighted person being employed.
* Explore the policies and practices employers currently have in place to support blind and partially sighted people in work.
* Look into attitudes around the perceived benefits and challenges of having blind and partially sighted people in workforce.
* Assess the extent to which current legislation is working and is fit for purpose.
* Better understand what blind and partially sighted people would like to see from an employer.
* Gather solutions that government and other partners should consider at a policy and operational level.

The inquiry will run for six weeks and will consist of a written call for evidence and a number of oral evidence sessions in Parliament. The APPG will publish a report setting out recommendations that government, employers and other stakeholders can implement to create an inclusive workforce of the future.

**Call for Evidence**

The APPG inquiry welcomes formal written submissions from businesses, blind and partially sighted people, charities, DPOs, trade unions and trade associations on the key questions below. We also welcome any documents and data relevant to the questions and any other information which is deemed relevant. Formal written submissions and any other evidence can be sent to: contact@eyehealthviappg.org.uk.

* **For employers, the APPG would welcome evidence on the following questions:**
1. Does your organisation or the type of role you are recruiting for prevent you from employing a blind or partially sighted person?
2. At what stage during the recruitment process has your organisation been prevented from considering a blind or partially sighted person?
3. Does your organisation consider blind and partially sighted people less able to carry out particular roles? If so, which roles are they?
4. What steps are your organisation taking to actively reduce barriers in your workplace? Please include practical examples and case studies where possible.
5. What actions has your organisation taken to build and develop best practice for disabled people in your workplace? Please include any examples and case studies where possible.
6. Do you think the government does enough to advertise and raise awareness of workplace support available for blind and partially sighted people, such as the Access to Work Scheme?
7. What are some of the myths or misconceptions your organisation has encountered which have prevented you from employing a blind or partially sighted person? Please include any examples and case studies where possible.
8. Do you believe your organisation complies with the legislation and policies around inclusive recruitment, training and development and retention?
9. What support do you feel your organisation could benefit from to employ blind and partially sighted people?
10. Please include anything else you feel relevant.

**For blind and partially sighted people the APPG would welcome evidence on the following questions:**

1. What have been some of barriers you’ve encountered when looking for employment?
2. If you have encountered any negative experiences, what could have been done to improve your experience?
3. Can you tell us about best practice from employers have you experienced?
4. Have you disclosed your sight loss during a recruitment and selection process, and if so, at what stage? If not, can you share why?
5. Do you think other factors as well as your sight have been a factor in preventing you from obtaining employment or from being successful in your applications? For example, age, ethnicity and gender.
6. Do you think the government does enough to advertise and provide workplace support for blind and partially sighted people, such as the Access to Work Scheme?
7. Do you think the current legislation in place is sufficient and is being enforced correctly? If not, how could it be improved?
8. Please include anything else you feel relevant.

For any other organisation, including Charities, DPO’s & Trade Unions please respond to any questions listed above that your feel are relevant.

**Submissions**

Written submissions of no more than **2000 words** must be submitted by **Friday 15th March 2023.**

Please provide or indicate the following in your evidence:

* Organisation name, size, sector and if you are part of the Disability Confident Scheme and if so what level (or name if replying as an individual).
* Contact details including email and phone number.
* Whether you are willing to speak at a future APPG meeting.
* Submissions may form part of the published report and be included on the APPG website. Any evidence may either be submitted on an anonymous basis (meaning that it will be published, but without your name), or in confidence (meaning that it won't be published at all). If you would like to submit evidence anonymously or in confidence, please let us know at the beginning of your submission.

Please note this is not an official House of Commons or House of Lords Inquiry. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in the Inquiry’s report will be those of the group.