

All Party-Parliamentary Group on Eye
Health and Visual Impairment

Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: One Year On: Progress, Challenges and Next Steps



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Foreword

On Monday 2nd of February 2026, I was proud to host a parliamentary reception at the House of Commons, bringing together parliamentarians, employers, sector leaders and individuals with lived experience of sight loss. The event provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of how far we have come, while also recognising that meaningful change requires sustained commitment.

As someone with lived experience of sight loss, I know first-hand the barriers that can exist in accessing and progressing in employment. While it is encouraging to see growing awareness and positive steps from many employers, too many blind and partially sighted individuals continue to face unnecessary obstacles.

Contributions from speakers with lived experience and from employers reinforced the importance of accessible recruitment processes, effective workplace adjustments and strong leadership in building inclusive workplace cultures. We were also joined by Minister for Employment Diana Johnson MP, who spoke to the issues raised and the Government's work in this area.



I am grateful to everyone who has contributed their insights, evidence and lived experience over the past year. Continued collaboration between Parliament, employers and the sight loss community will be critical as we move from commitment to action.

Together, we must ensure that the ambition set out in *Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives* translates into real and lasting change.

Marsha De Cordova MP

Chair of the APPG on Eye Health and Vision Impairment

Assessing Progress to Date: The employment gap remains stark



The headline statistic remains unchanged: only one in four registered blind and partially sighted people of working age are in employment.

Evidence has shown that employer attitudes and inaccessible practices remain among the most significant barriers to closing this gap. YouGov polling commissioned by the APPG, published in 2024, found that a quarter (25%) of employers said they would not be willing to make workplace adaptations for a blind or partially sighted person, while nearly half (47%) did not know where to access funding for adjustments.[1]

While many employers are committed to inclusion, misconceptions about cost, productivity and complexity persist.

Disability Confident Reform must go further

The APPG's original report raised concerns about the effectiveness of the Disability Confident scheme. It remains possible to reach the highest level of the scheme without employing a disabled person.

In January 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions announced an overhaul of the Disability Confident scheme, followed by a reform delivery plan in February 2026. These reforms aim to introduce clearer standards, improve transparency and strengthen accountability, including changes to how long employers can remain at entry level.[2]

These are positive steps and reflect growing recognition that the scheme is not currently driving consistent outcomes. However, if the scheme is to drive genuine change, it must go further – with clearer performance measures, stronger quality assurance and demonstrable outcomes in recruitment and retention. It remains possible to reach the highest level of the scheme without actually having a disabled employee. As set out in the APPG's original report, this should include requiring employers to evidence the recruitment and progression of disabled people as part of accreditation, as it remains possible to reach the highest level of the scheme without actually having a disabled employee.

If Disability Confident is to carry weight, it must provide confidence to disabled people as well as employers.

[1] Thomas Pocklington Trust (2024) 'New Polling Reveals Nealy Half of Employers Are Excluding Blind and Partially Sighted People from the Workplace'

[2] DWP (2026) 'Disability Confident scheme overhauled to boost workplace standards for disabled people'

Assessing Progress to Date: The employment gap remains stark



Access to Work

Access to Work remains a vital route to supporting blind and partially sighted people into and in employment. However, concerns continue regarding delays, inconsistencies and reductions in awards at renewal.

Evidence submitted to the APPG by RNIB indicated that Access to Work is currently the single most common employment issue raised by people with sight loss. Individuals report experiencing reductions in support at renewal – including cuts to support worker hours and rates – despite no change in condition or circumstances. This raises serious concerns about the consistency and transparency of decision-making within the scheme.[3] For many, this is making it much harder to do their jobs and, in some cases, is putting their employment at risk.

Delays in processing applications – with over 66,000 cases outstanding applications in March 2026 – risk undermining confidence in the scheme and, in some cases, job security.[4] Sector organisations continue to report long waiting times and reductions in support at renewal, even when circumstances have not changed.

Stakeholders have also raised concerns about any changes that may reduce the level of support available or increase employer contributions, warning that this could further limit opportunities for blind and partially sighted people.[5]

Access to Work must be reliable, timely and consistent. This should include the introduction of clear service standards, including maximum waiting times and a fast-track process where an individual's job is at risk. Decision-making at renewal should be more transparent, with written justification required for any reduction in support where circumstances have not changed.

Reforms should also ensure meaningful involvement of disabled people, including blind and partially sighted people, in the design and delivery of future changes, in line with the APPG's recommendations in the *Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives* Report.

[3] RNIB, evidence submitted to the APPG on Eye Health and Visual Impairment (2026)

[4] House of Commons (2026). Written Question UIN 115214. Available here: <https://members.parliament.uk/member/5314/writtenquestions#expand-1883788>

[5] RNIB, evidence submitted to the APPG on Eye Health and Visual Impairment (2026)

Assessing Progress to Date:

The employment gap remains stark



Technology and accessibility

Technology continues to be both an enabler and a barrier.

While assistive technology has advanced significantly, evidence submitted to the APPG highlights that inaccessible recruitment platforms, internal systems and new software rollouts are still excluding blind and partially sighted people from applying for, securing and progressing in work.[6]

Case study evidence provided to the APPG illustrates the impact of this in practice. One example highlighted a partially sighted intern who was unable to use newly implemented internal software due to incompatibility with screen reader technology. Retrofitting accessibility solutions proved complex and costly, and in some cases no viable solution was identified.[7]

Accessibility must be built in from the outset, not retrofitted at significant cost later. Enforcing minimum digital accessibility standards remains an important step in ensuring equal access to opportunity.

Ongoing Challenges:

- Employer misconceptions and low expectations continue to limit opportunities. Evidence submitted to the APPG highlights that many employers still lack confidence in how blind and partially sighted people can carry out roles, with some unwilling to make adjustments or unsure what support is available.[8]
- Inaccessible recruitment processes continue to exclude candidates at the first hurdle. Stakeholders consistently reported that application systems, online tests and interview processes are not designed with accessibility in mind, preventing qualified candidates from progressing.[9]
- Delays and inconsistencies in employment support schemes undermine confidence. Evidence from RNIB and others highlights ongoing issues with Access to Work, including delays, unclear decision-making and reductions in support at renewal.[10]
- Vision rehabilitation services remain inconsistent and under resourced. Delays in rehabilitation affect independence, mobility, confidence, digital capability and readiness for work. Many individuals continue to face long waits for assessment and support, limiting their ability to develop the skills needed to enter or remain in employment.[11]

Closing the employment gap will require a coordinated, cross-government approach that addresses these systemic issues alongside employer attitudes and practices.

[6] RNIB and Nystagmus Network, evidence submitted to the APPG on Eye Health and Visual Impairment (2026)

[7] Evidence Submitted to the APPG by a qualified teacher of visual impairment, Southwark (2026)

[8] RNIB and Nystagmus Network, evidence submitted to the APPG (2026)

[9] RNIB, evidence on Access to Work submitted to the APPG (2026)

[10] RNIB, research on vision rehabilitation waiting times and service provision (2024–2025)

[11] Ibid.

Priorities for the Year Ahead

The APPG welcomes the UK Government's broader commitment to strengthening employment rights and improving disability equality. This includes the ambitions set out in the Keep Britain Working review, particularly its focus on improving data and labour market participation for disabled people.[12] Recent updates, including the Government's March 2026 announcement on expanding delivery across employers and regions, further reinforce this focus.[13] As a cross-party group, we remain committed to working constructively with ministers and stakeholders to ensure that blind and partially sighted people are not left behind. Based on the evidence gathered over the past year, the APPG believes progress should focus on:

1. Tackling Employer Attitudes and Accountability

Stakeholder evidence consistently highlighted that negative perceptions, low expectations and a lack of understanding remain among the biggest barriers to employment.

- Employers must be better supported, and challenged, to understand how blind and partially sighted people can work effectively, including through engagement with the Employer Vanguard programme being developed as part of the next steps of the Keep Britain Working Review.
- Greater accountability is needed to ensure employers are not excluding candidates through inaccessible practices or bias, including a failure to make reasonable adjustments and persistent discrimination in recruitment and progression.
- Government should work with employers and sector bodies to deliver targeted guidance and awareness campaigns, alongside stronger enforcement of existing equality duties, as recommended in the original APPG report.[14]

2. Strengthening Access to Work

Access to Work is not currently working as intended for many people with sight loss.

- Address delays and backlogs that risk people losing or leaving jobs
- Ensure fairness, consistency and transparency in decision-making, particularly at renewal.
- Prevent unjustified reductions in support, including cuts to support worker hours and rates.
- Introduce service standards, including timelines for decisions and a fast-track route where employment is at a risk.

[12] GOV.UK (2026) [Keep Britain Working: Final report - GOV.UK](#)[3] House of Commons (2026).

[13] Department for Work and Pensions (2026) Support for Keep Britain Working ramps us across employers and regions

[14] APPG Eye Health and Vision Impairment (2024) Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: An Inquiry into Employer Attitudes and the Employment of Blind and Partially Sighted People

Priorities for the Year Ahead

3. Making Disability Confident Meaningful

Stakeholders were clear that Disability Confident is not currently driving change.

- Introduce credible measures to demonstrate whether employers are recruiting and retaining those who are blind or partially sighted.
- Strengthen accountability and quality standards including addressing the current gap where accreditation does not require demonstrable employment of disabled people.
- Align the scheme with the APPG's original recommendation that accreditation should reflect real-world employment outcomes, not just commitments.

4. Designing Accessibility into Systems from the Start

Evidence shows that inaccessible recruitment platforms and workplace technology continue to exclude people unnecessarily.

- Ensure accessibility is built into systems at the design stage, recognising that retrofitting accessibility is often significantly more costly and less effective than designing it in from the outset.
- Address barriers in recruitment processes, internal systems and new software rollouts.
- Mandate minimum digital accessibility standards for recruitment platforms and employer websites.

5. Strengthening Vision Rehabilitation

Timely access to properly resourced vision rehabilitation services is fundamental to enabling people with sight loss to gain and retain employment. Delays in accessing rehabilitation can directly impact independence, mobility, confidence and digital capability, all of which are essential for entering and sustaining work.

- Reduce waiting times and ensure services are consistently delivered nationwide and properly regulated and resourced.
- Recognise vision rehabilitation as a key employment enabler and integrate it more clearly into employment support pathways, so that people are supported to enter, remain and progress in work.

Priorities for the Year Ahead

6. Expanding Pathways into Work

Practical initiatives, such as the Thomas Pocklington Trust supported internship, and targeted employment programmes, such as RNIB's Visibly Better Employer quality standard, are making a real difference, as we heard at the reception in February.

- Scale up programmes that provide direct experience and build employer confidence, alongside clearer employer guidance and accountability, to translate experience into sustained employment outcomes.
- Support approaches that bring employers and blind and partially sighted people together in meaningful ways.
- Strengthen the Connect to Work programme by providing greater flexibility in the support timelines, recording and assessing how effectively the programme supports different groups and involving disability and sight loss specialists in programme design and delivery.

Conclusion

One year on from the publication of *Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives*, progress has been made in raising awareness and sustaining parliamentary engagement. However, the evidence gathered over the past year makes it clear that structural barriers and persistent misconceptions continue to limit opportunities for blind and partially sighted people.

Too many of the challenges identified in the original report remain — from inaccessible recruitment processes and employer attitudes to inconsistencies in employment support and delays in accessing vital services. While recent reforms signal positive intent, meaningful change has yet to be fully realised.

Closing the employment gap for blind and partially sighted people will require a shift from ambition to delivery. This means ensuring accountability within schemes, embedding accessibility by design, and maintaining sustained political focus across government. It also requires clear ownership of delivery across departments, with measurable outcomes and regular reporting on progress.

The APPG will continue to work constructively, as both a partner and a critical friend, to ensure that blind and partially sighted people are not only supported to enter employment but are able to thrive and progress within it.

Acknowledgements

The APPG would like to thank all individuals and organisations who submitted evidence and shared their lived experience over the past year. Their contributions have been essential in informing this report and ensuring that its findings reflect the real experiences of blind and partially sighted people