

Tuesday, 24th November 2015

WharfAbility - Disability Confident: Challenging Perceptions

Held at EY, 25 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14

IAIN WILKIE: Good evening everybody. Can you hear me? Excellent. We have just got a few more people arriving.

Well welcome. Thank you very much for coming to the new EY offices here in Canary Wharf. I am Iain Wilkie, a partner here at EY and one of my roles one of my most enjoyable roles is that I am a partner sponsor for Ability EY which is the overarching network which sort of covers all our health and disability networks. That's what I do four days a week, not Ability EY although I would love to, and then the fifth day each week I spend I am the co-chairman of the employers stammering network which was set up a couple of years ago so rather like the ability wide in the work like WharfAbility that's another kind of network of networks.

So it really is a pleasure to welcome you on behalf of everyone who is here from EY here this evening. There are several of us here from different generations and diversity I suppose. It feels really weird actually to be kicking off an event that is really WharfAbility event and I am very aware that Julie and her team have done a huge amount of work and I am just the chap who has been asked to say welcome to, so on behalf of everyone here I can tell from the outside how much effort, I know how much effort goes into organising this rebel into this event on this particular evening. So well done.

And in the spirit of sharing, actually there is just one thing I need to share in the spirit of sharing, if the fire alarm goes off then and an announcement will come to tell us what to do. If we have to evacuate there are stairs almost directly out of these doors, there are doors at the back as well, and to the right and then on the left, but if you are unable to use stairs, much further down on the left is a lift that will still work even if the main lifts are cut out of electricity. So now, if the fire alarm does go off, don't move straight away, it will say

whether you know what the kind of status it will put us on alert and then we have to wait.

My second thing in the spirit of sharing is just tell you a little bit about EY and what we do around disability health and disability networks. So we have 6 networks, and they are kind of some are really small and some are really quite big, so the smallest but nonetheless the very active one that is really well led is the autism network; we then have - well, they are all well led actually but Paul King leads autism, and there is then deaf and hard of hearing, and there is dyslexia, there is mobility and James Gower from that network one of the co-chairs of that network is here this evening, mental health, and then stammering and speech. So we have the 6 overarching networks and the thrust through all of it is around positive attributes, it is not the kind of naive positive attributes but it's actually really about changing the culture within our firm, so that having a long term health condition or a disability isn't seen as something that's kind of charitable or a problem or something to be fixed. Of course there are harsh realities that go with that. And, you know, I grew up in a home where my mother suffered from mental illness, my wife is disabled and I myself struggled with my stammer for a lot of the early stages of my career, now am kind of more fluent. But so just to bring that kind of positive attributes piece to life, I thought I would share the recent campaign we have done at EY which is on international stammering awareness day on 22nd October this year. So we ran a big campaign really to raise awareness that stammering is okay at EY, and that you never said you couldn't block and hesitate on words, that you had to be fluent. So we had a bunch of posters five of us had our posters up, this size, and then we had various cards and we had screens up all the whole week. The whole thing was around positive attributes so this is one of the cards, this is a guy called Ricky. He is one of our co-chairs. You probably can't see it but and I think the first thing to say this is Ricky, it isn't a model, this is an authentic EY guy joined us four years ago; was actually our fourth member to join our stammering network so when I set it up, it is one by one, it's desperately difficult as you all know, so Ricky came to us as a graduate from Warwick -- Loughborough university, and so authentically risky he has disclosed he has a stammer, he has a prolific stammer, world class stammer actually, he is kind of one of our best stammerers so he is really a great guy, much better than me! *{Laughter}*. He is a senior consultant in advisory so he has had two promotions in his time at EY, he is energetic, he is

self confident, he is committed and he is pro-active and he is sociable, he stammers, it is okay to stammer. And then it says: Ricky gains from being himself at work. EY does too. But I am a partner, I own a fraction of the firm. I am an employer as well as partner sponsor, so I really want EY to gain too, it is kind of common sense business isn't it? Ricky gained from being himself at work. EY does too, that's why EY is a member of the employers stammering network. We can't do it on our own without other networks, we can't do it without being part of the Ability wide and we can't do it without being members of WharfAbility or the BDF, or whoever, and I learnt that very early when I set up the EY stammering network.

So I am thrilled to spend some time with WharfAbility. I really want to learn more about you, thrilled to be able to kick this off this evening and delighted to hand over to David Caldwell who's co-chair of WharfAbility. Thank you. *{Applause}*.

DAVID: Good evening everybody. Thank you very much, Iain, for welcoming us all here tonight and thank you more widely to the team at EY for hosting us. I think you will agree this is a fantastic location and thank you for coming out this evening to talk about disability confidence. As many of you will appreciate, this time of year is a very important time of year for the disability agenda and I am proud that WharfAbility is doing its bit to *{Inaudible}*. WharfAbility was the brain child of James Spears. He realised it was a great opportunity to share best practice and across the many organisations based in Canary Wharf. The original, and John called them the magnificent 7 were Citi, Clifford Chance, Credit Suisse, Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan, KPMG and of course Thompson Reuters who collectively came up with our name WharfAbility. And since then, and over the last couple of years, we have grown to include more than 30 organisations, and grown outside of Canary Wharf as well. We are now city based organisations and even some are based in London. And earlier this year we joined with IBAG, which is the InterBank Accessibility Group to increase our company base.

WharfAbility's mission is to connect businesses and colleagues to share experiences and ideas enabling them to increase their impact at work. And I actually believe it's one of the very few places that you will see many peer organisations and even

competitors sitting around the table talking about the very very important topic of disability, that is a testament to how organisations now view disability and accessibility and something we need to work together to address and to move forwards with. I know WharfAbility two years ago and last year was luckily enough to take over the reins from John, the group continues to go from strength to strength because of the passion of our members. Long may this continue. It is and as I say best practice sharing is one of the best ways we as group of organisations can help to drive this agenda.

Before I hand you over to Simon a few thanks from me. Firstly, thank you again to EY and to Iain, and thanks to Simon to Kate to Tab, who are on stage at the moment and Yvonne, and to Emily, James and Uzair who you will hear from later on. And Iain mentioned events like this don't happen without a group of people putting a lot of time and effort into them, so a massive thank you from me to the team of people from WharfAbility who have put this together and Julie, Andrew, Dawn, Jay, Bindi, Vanda, Paula - thank you very, very much for your effort tonight. Finally, thank you to the team 121 Captions who are providing the live captioning for us tonight.

So without further ado I am going to hand you over to Simon Minty, who will be facilitating it. Simon is a director of Sminty Limited, a training and consultancy organisation. He is also the producer of the comedy troupe Abnormally Funny People, who I can personally recommend and endorse. They are one of the funniest group of people I have had time to spend with. Thank you all again for coming and I look forward to spending some time with you and afterwards in the networking. Thank you very much.

{Applause}.

SIMON MINTY: Good evening, Oh wow -- a very warm welcome to all of you; this has filled up in those last few minutes, this is the great audience. If you want to move forward a little bit by the way, it is not a comedy show, so we are not going to heckle you if you come close to the front, if that works by all means just make yourself comfortable.

I am Simon Minty. I will be the official moderator for this evening. Abnormally Funny People, my comedy team, we were in Edinburgh in August and a friend recommended me to see a show, which was called Just a Few Words, which was an actor, a

very young guy who had a stammer and he had written a one man play of him performing it. It is a bit like a busman's holiday because my whole world is disability and it was towards the end of the run and I am ever so tired, but I thought I must go and in typical Edinburgh fashion I climbed down all these stairs, which was quite difficult, got to this tiny little room and it was me and him. And we had a chat and I realised after about ten minutes the show hadn't started, and I felt for him because it was just me and him and he looked at me and said, I am really sorry but I can't do the show unless there is at least two people. So a little bit of me was secretly relieved. So I went back upstairs and thought I will have a little sleep and just as I was moving and trying to get my scooter out, a couple arrived and they went downstairs and I thought, Oh no, he has enough people now. I couldn't get up -- I came tearing up the stairs, we all went back downstairs and the bit I found, it was a really complex quite difficult place to watch but the bit he used -- the reason he needed two people is he got audience participation, two groups, there was only two and me. And we had to sing Barbara Ann by the Beach Boys and if you know that song, the "ba ba ba" and it was his way for us to try and link up - whether that's effective or not - but I am going to link up because he is an interesting guy.

That was my digression. This evening is around employment. We have 3 fabulous speakers I will introduce you to properly in a moment. We're also going to change half way through and have 3 employees. We have got two of them are here. I am hoping the other one does turn up, 2 or 3 employees who are working who actually have some sort of long term health condition or disability; and we will talk to them about how their career is going and how they started working and it made me think I feel I am a bit of an elder person now; as in 30 years ago I started working for Barclays Bank, that was my first proper job and I remember at the time it was because my family knew a regional director at the local head office, so I had the interview with him, and unbeknown to me I thought I would get any job I wanted to, but then this is, what, mid eighties, maybe there was a perception that we kind of had to get me into through the back door, but I got in and I spent 7 very happy years there and you may well know this is the 20th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act this month. Have we all celebrated? Just the two of you, great! *{Laughter}*.

It is not perfect. It's now the Equality Act, it has been blended into another piece of legislation. I do think it was a sea change. You will hear from some of the speakers the shift for me was when I was at Barclays in the last year maybe, I started getting invited to disability do's or events. And they were trying to explore what to do better with their staff who had a disability. But with the legislation coming in '95/'96 and onwards at different points, that just changed that conversation. That meant we were a lot more open; as a disabled person you can ask for adjustments to make you more effective so it just kind of changed the dynamic, even if it wasn't quite perfect because it is still not perfect because we still have pretty high unemployment rates of disabled people and that worries me.

I had a nice moment. The 30, 20, just over 27 years ago we hosted something dying with a difference. Myself, James Partridge from Changing Faces and Phil Friend, who runs a consultancy too, we did this at Barclays last week at the end of the - we go round the table and ask people an action, what might they do as a result of this dinner. And one of the people said, well I attended one of your dinners about ten years ago. And he said, at the end of it my boss said, right that's it, we are going to start getting more disabled people in, we are not doing it properly and fairly shortly after that had a recruitment team and one of the people he recruited was someone who had a learning disability and he said the nature of the learning disability did mean their work was going to be somewhat limited, however we found a fabulous job for them. And he said, they are still working for us, 10/11 years later and he also said, it's that sense of worth, that sense of well-being that sense of contribution, all the things that come with working that many of you may well take for granted and some of you may be yes, we forget how good that can be, being self-employed when it goes quiet for a few days I get a little bit jumpy and then I go and do some work and I feel worthwhile again, so that concept of getting people who have a disability or long term health condition keeping them in work is so critical.

Okay. I think that's enough from me setting the scene. I am very excited to hear the next, because you do know we were going to have the minister who I interviewed three weeks ago for BBC Ouch, and I said to one - maybe I got a bit too hard on him and that's why he found out I was chairing this today, so he said that no, I am not going; if you want to hear about the history of the legislation and activists have a listen to the BBC Ouch

podcast from this month actually, it is a really interesting historical story.

However, despite not having the minister we have a fabulous substitute. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Yvonne O'Hara who is the deputy director of disability communications, communications directorate, at DWP.

YVONNE O'HARA: My apologies on his behalf. He has to vote in the House and he said to me, if we could certainly facilitate another event where he could come, he is definitely keen to lend his support. So I don't know if I will be quite as interesting as the minister, but I am going to do my best and I will take any questions and feedback you might have for him, particularly tricky questions that I can't answer and I will take them in the Q and A session.

What I want to do today was just give you a brief overview of Disability Confident, what the campaign is. And also see if you personally could get involved in the campaign, because it is an employer facing campaign, so I am keen to hear from employers who aren't already on board who might want to collaborate with me on the campaign.

So Disability Confident - it is a communications campaign, which works to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people. It has a variety of key aims and over the last two years it has really been about raising awareness of this important issue, so that we can help disabled people to fulfil their potential. The campaign was launched in 2013 and works primarily by working with employers to show case best practice; because when I speak to employers they are interested in hearing what other similar employers are doing and particularly with employers from different sectors with small number of employees, they want to see how it works the sort of ground breaking work that employers are doing.

Since the general election the government has committed to halving the disability employment gap, so following on from what Simon was talking about the issue of disability, if employment is a really big one for me as the head of communications team, that means really looking at how we can move the campaign into a different domain and how we can help to contribute towards halving that disability employment gap. I don't know if people here know what the disability employment gap is. Anyone hazard a guess, in percentage terms, so what do you think it might be? Anybody know?

FROM THE FLOOR: Is it similar to like the women pay gap, is it similar to that?

YVONNE O'HARA: So it's 30%. So equates to getting approximately a million more

people into work. So it is a significant challenge the government is committed to over the last five years and that's the reason why Disability Confident focuses on employers as the primary audience. Research indicates, as you may or may not know, that 42% of disabled people who are seeking work say that the biggest barrier that they encounter when looking for a job is the attitude of employers. So what Disability Confident seeks to do is to change those attitudes and to dispel any myths that may exist negative or otherwise around recruiting and retaining disabled people.

The campaign works primarily with what we call campaign partners, so we have over 300 employers who are supporters of the campaign, and we have 70 active partners and they are partners who are really committed to taking tangible action in this area. I will give a flavour of what two of our most active partners have done to demonstrate their commitment to Disability Confident, to give you a flavour. So the first one is Barclays, where Simon worked; we work very, very closely with Barclays who have committed to pledge to a range of initiatives as partners of Disability Confident. So for them their ultimate goal is to become the world's most accessible bank and their commitment to disability doesn't just extend to the employees in the organisation, but interestingly they are also looking at the customer area, with their beacon technology where they are seeking to improve the customer experience of disabled people coming into the bank. But we've worked very closely with them on looking at what they currently do. So, for example, they have a REACH colleagues network which they pledged as part of the campaign to expand globally, and they also expanded their AFTER programme which is their really pioneering programme for injured British army forces and injured veterans who can move into employment in the bank and have committed to offering work placements and helping to develop work place skills, so really significant activities for us which demonstrates a tangible commitment to Disability Confident.

We have worked with them on a range of things, so being a partner also involves coming on board with our communications initiatives, so we have co-hosted a Disability Confident business breakfast with them, and I also spoke with them at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Diversity Summit in 2014, which really again give other employers an opportunity to see what Barclays are doing, and we as government can show case and shine a light on that activity and hopefully encourage other employers to do

the same.

The other employer partner I want to mention was National Grid. So they have just recently joined as a campaign partner and this has been a really exciting partnership for us in the Disability Confident campaign team. They launched an Employability programme in 2013 which specifically aims to create employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties and the initiative itself has achieved a 70% success rate for graduates finding paid employment as a consequence of doing their year long work programme. So it has been really, really fantastic being able to get on board with that initiative and again shine a light on it so other employers can learn from best practice. And to celebrate two years of the campaign, we launched a LinkedIn show case page and featured one of their most recent interns who has autism and is now employed in the customer service role. So if you get a chance, take a look at that video. It is a great example - I didn't want to use any slides today - but if I were, I would show you a video because it is a great example of how the employer really made a tangible difference to somebody's life.

So, what I wanted to also talk about is I suppose in terms of where Disability Confident has been focused on and where we wanted it to focus on in the future. So as I mentioned, it has been primarily about raising awareness and show casing best practice, and last year we wanted to build much more local support for the issue and worked with MPs and achieve cross party support which is something I was really personally really proud of before the general election. So MPs of all different political parties ran Disability Confident events. We have had 20 to date and we have got four more in the diary for the New Year, and they are a great opportunity for MPs to just step away from the political role and actually focus on something that can really make a huge difference. And it brings Disability Confident, it transmits the message more broadly at a more local level.

The focus moving forward for 2016 is about to shift. As I have said, the government's commitment to halving the disability employment gap means I have a much bigger communications challenge on my hands; and when I move the campaign beyond awareness to real tangible actions, so one of the things that the policy team are developing at the moment is looking at a sign up facility where employers can sign up to be Disability Confident, but actually the criteria will be different depending on the different sorts of levels. So that's something we are working on at the moment with a range of and will be working on

with a range of disability stakeholders and disabled people in the new year. So very excited about that but I can't say much more about it for now.

We also want to reach out to SMEs so we did some focus groups to understand actually what did this -- SME is a big group, as you know, SME is a group, a range in terms of size of employees, it is really quite wide -- but what we wanted to understand was actually what are their attitudes to recruiting and retaining disabled people and the main truth that emerged they see it as either they see it as really, really difficult and they perceive it to be difficult. So my challenge in communications terms is to look at how they can work more closely with SMEs to help them to see that actually this is easy, and this is achievable. So, you know, my goal with the campaign is to get more smaller sized employers on board and to encourage, through the sharing of best practice, show how those employers can make a real difference.

One of the other initiatives that I am also working on which we are looking to launch in the New Year will be around working with employers who can make their supply chains Disability Confident. So it is a project that I am working on at the moment and I am hoping to have something to announce around February or March of next year, but if you are sitting there as an employer and thinking you actually will be interested in something like that, then please do come and talk to me.

So I suppose what has Disability Confident achieved? I mean, in the time it has existed we have seen more disabled people move into employment. So 339,000 disabled people moved into employment since the campaign launched. We have got 500 followers on our LinkedIn show case page and achieved a lot of PR coverage, but we have a lot more to do. So I suppose my rallying cry this evening is if you as an employer are committed and open to employing and retaining disabled people and want to talk about it and share your best practice, then please come and speak to me or my colleague Hugo, who's here this evening. We would absolutely love to hear from you and if you are interested in getting involved in the local element, you can get involved in a range of MP events that will be happening in the New Year, and we will also be celebrating quite heavily UN international day for persons with disabilities next week. So please keep a weather eye on our LinkedIn show case page, where we are featuring lots of case studies. I would love it if you either as an individual or an employer would follow us, see what we are about and if you

would like to get involved, as I said, really absolutely love to hear from you.

So, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. I am here this evening if anyone wants to find out more about the campaign. I could talk about partners for hours and hours, but I only have a short time slot. I think groups like this are really important because it is an opportunity for employers from a range of sectors to come together and actually share best practice and that's what this campaign is about, so thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. As I mentioned, if you are an employer and not already a partner and you are interested in coming on board, then please do get in touch. I would absolutely love to hear from you. The ambition to halve the disability employment gap isn't something that's going to be tackled by a communications campaign and I am not going to suggest that it can. However, I firmly believe that by providing an opportunity to show case best practice we can really make a difference towards tackling those sometimes negative attitudes that exist amongst employers and shattering those myths and really helping disabled people to fulfil their potential.

Thank you. *{Applause}*.

SIMON MINTY: Thank you very much, Yvonne. As Yvonne alluded to, at the end we will get everybody back up here and hopefully some more seats and have a Q and A with you and also maybe a conversation afterwards when we are networking.

So she's already in place. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to introduce Kate Nash. I just have to say Kate Nash PurpleSpace in one word now, because we have got into a weird habit to do it a little bit more formally, the creator of PurpleSpace which is a support and learning hub for disability network leaders and employees. Kate will be talking about the language of disclosure.

KATE NASH: Simon, thank you. Well, good evening, delighted to join you and thanks to Julie and David and the WharfAbility team for the invitation to be with you. Thank you also to Iain. It is lovely to be in your new offices. I hope your teams are very happy here, beautiful, beautiful offices and your generosity in hosting us is fabulous.

So I suppose we are part of a warm up team really for the main event with you and others a little later on. But, as Simon said, I have been invited along to talk a

little bit about the language of disclosure and more broadly about the messages that came out of the piece of research we did last year: Secrets and Big News, which is one year old and we are doing a little deep dive to see what employers have done differently and better as a result of the big ideas that came out of that and you are more than welcome to come along, there are a few spaces.

I think by way of reminder, as many of you will know, over the last ten years or so I have helped to support employers to set up or mind the opportunity, the effectiveness of disabled employee networks or resource groups or affinity groups - they are all called something slightly different - and during that time we have supported over 300 employers, both in the public and the private sector, to get together and with those network leaders reach an estimated 250,000 disabled employees that are in work right now, their staff flourishing the network and delivering for their business and their organisation. And although the network leaders work closely with these networks and these individuals, it's still a largely unseen community of incredible purple talent that I think together changing and shaping the narrative about disability at work and enabling it what I would call a richer and more meaningful exchange between disabled employees about what it means to get ahead at work, because it is not just about getting in, though we know that's incredibly important and the challenges that exist and Tab will be talking a little bit about that, but once you are in work, what do you do as an individual to make sure you've got skin in the game, that you can make the ask for the work place adjustments, that you can be your best self at work, etc.etc.? And navigate what we often call the self bigotry of low expectations that can exist. So we call this the third phase of change and I think we have entered a distinctly new era of change in relation to disability employment.

As Simon reminded us earlier, the first phase was the establishment of the DDA. I can't believe it is the 20th year anniversary. Where does time go when you are having fun! And I suppose in effect the legislation was really the hygiene process, where we established the legal duty to make adjustments for disabled people at work among other things.

The second stage, which Yvonne has spoken about, is a process - and this stage continues - is the process by which businesses are becoming Disability Confident

through best practice tools and enabling products and benchmarks etc.etc., and it is a helpful language originally conceived by the Business Disability Forum and helpfully promoted by the government in that it helps us to, I suppose, reach a greater number of the organisations who surely see the value in hiring and retaining purple talent, and I think one of the great things the government campaign is doing is to amplify and I suppose highlight existing good practice as well as encouraging new pledges. So this second stage is really the enablement of organisations to understand that disabled people can and should be employed in proper meaningful work.

Meanwhile, and as that stage 2 continues, we see disabled employees themselves have created what I would call the third phase of change and it is a face that is characterised by disabled employees as well as others who choose not to use that word to define themselves and yet still covered by the Equality Act; and I know Simon is going to help us have a conversation about how we feel about that language. But it is about those individuals shaping and sharing their powerful stories, describing their truth and their world, so that organisations just get it and want to invest in their talent, want to invest in their careers and their progression. This can be most clearly illustrated by the wonderful trailer that was produced by Channel 4 for the Paralympics just after the Olympics and many of you will remember the teasing of that line: Thanks for the warm up. Do you remember it? Wonderful wasn't it? Very powerful and it was naughty, it was exciting and it really just told the story about how far disabled people have come in claiming their own place in the world. And it conveyed competition, it conveyed power, the thrill of a new dawn, and in the work that we do we are just underpinning the existing purple talent the network leaders that we work with. It was seen in their work that there are elements of that up and down the UK - in other words, thanks for the warm-up in terms of the legislation, in terms of the enabling products, still need those things. But it is phase 3 that I am most excited about.

So, that's the language of disclosure. I want to share with you a couple of key messages that came out of this piece of research, the back drop. Well, Yvonne reminded us still how many disabled people are not in paid employment and yet we know from DWP figures, from the Office of National Statistics -- put my teeth back in -- the ONS that figures tell us that broadly any employer in the UK will have between ten to 12% of their work force will have a disability. And yet typically when employers, not all do, but when

employers choose or have to monitor we often get data of anything between 2 to 4%. So, you know, where are these missing folks? What is it about the experience of disability that makes it more difficult for us to share that personal data with others and particularly our employers?

So in our research we asked 2 and a half thousand disabled people that took part, 55 employers to reach together 2 and a half thousand disabled people, and these are the 3 key messages that I share with you: One is as a people we do not like the language of disability. We can dress it up and offer much clearer definitions about what it means in terms of the Equality Act. You can augment and supplement those definitions with different illustrations of different impairments that are covered by the Act. You can refer to the social model of disability. You can politicise people and you can distinguish between impairment and disability, and you can talk about disabled people and you can talk about people with disabilities. But, as human beings, it is not a personal identity that we run towards, we don't gravitate to that language. And an example of that in our research and I'll just read off. We asked a series of questions of these 2 and a half thousand disabled people, so one of the questions -- well, one of the -- we reminded our audience. We said, look, over 11 million people with a health condition or an impairment are protected from discrimination by the disability provisions of the UK law. It is only a quarter of those. This is again another piece of great research that DWP did. Only a quarter of those describe themselves as disabled, so we asked the audience why do you think that's the case? And 36% said it is a big personal step to associate yourself with the word "disability". 27% said some people will always resist the label of disability because it feels so negative. And 22% said it takes a long time to understand that what you are experiencing is the same as employment law definitions of disability.

So, I have been in the game a horribly long time and if you snapped me like a stick of rock the words "social model of disability" run through me. I can't help it. You can take the girl out of politics; you can't take the politics out of the girl. But what do we do about this? What is it about the notion and the semantics of disability that we as a people just don't enjoy?

Secondly, the thing that came out of the research is that disabled people don't like the language of disclosure or declaration. We don't like those words. It is not

uncommon when talking about the sharing of personal information that both child professionals and disabled people themselves, some thought leaders, will use the words interchangeably. But one of the key findings from the people we surveyed is their view that the use of such language betrays a deep rooted unconscious bias from the use that, of course, experience of disability or ill health is a secret or a big piece of news; hence, the ironic title of the book: Secrets and Big News. If you use the language of disclosure you are suggesting that someone has a secret. If you use the language of declaration, you are suggesting it is a big piece of news. Now for some people at different times in their lives, that may have resonance and that's fair enough. But if you choose to use that organisation and institutionally, well you get what - you reap what you sew.

So, I think the unhelpful positioning as we know when someone acquires a disability as is often the case, 83% - I think 84% of all disabled people are those who have acquired their disability while at work. So and that comes with often a new identity and to share that as part of your personal story or your personal identity. I mean, some people don't have a choice, of course, but many, many, many do. And it takes as we know years when we either look at our own experiences of those of our loved ones or our line managers or our direct reports or our shareholders or, or, or, or ... it involves years of experience, of finessing the message; it involves quite a sophisticated and lengthy process of making sense of something that many folk, particularly those newly diagnosed, would prefer not to have and to compound the process by suggesting someone has a secret or a big piece of news is at best lazy and at worst foolish.

So sharing personal information I think is where we should be heading in terms of how we talk about these. I am often asked, what do you call it? We can't use declaration or disclosure. Soften, you make the language a little softer. It will be easier for people to be who they are.

What else? I think the other thing that came through from the research, if when choosing to tell anyone about their disability or impairment generally, our survey respondents are constantly taking into account how that information is going to be used by the business. So again I will share one of the questions we asked in the results. So we asked our participants how far would you agree with the following statement when deciding to tell anybody about my disability, illness, accident or injury. I take into account my view of how

others may react to me, even now or in the future. And at 75% people strongly agreed with that statement. So people are always assessing and assimilating the clues, the indicators as to how Disability Confident an organisation might be, and trying to make sense of that. So I think employers are making sense of an organisation's culture. Is there a culture that maybe compounds the bigotry of low expectation? How visible, easy and enjoyable the work place adjustment process might be? And how adept a company is in supporting its people to transcend other people's pity, and pity is one of the most corrosive of all emotions. You can't do too much with it, it is hard to duck it. And learning how to build resilience in the tools and the personal power to notice that and find your own tools to work around. That is incredibly important and I think organisations have a role to play in that.

But also people are looking at how the business is encouraging Disability Confident at the micro level, not just the macro level when we talk about our Disability Confident and what is it they offer by way of personal development. I know many of you come from organisations that are already investing. You are either augmenting your existing leadership programmes or your mentoring schemes or the coaching programmes, so you are noticing what do we need to do differently and better within a main stream programme to make sure we attract purple talent and deliver well in terms of personal development. But of course people are also picking up too - is there a good network? Is it resourced as much as women's network or the BME network? And how far is the organisation taking up and noticing the imaginative campaigns we are starting to see? Special campaigns, the Barclays campaign is just juicy and delicious and they have the Shell campaign, Inspiring Ability from HSBC; Be Completely New from Fujitsu. But we are just seeing the most fantastic campaigns that are, I suppose, ultimately enabling them to bring their authentic themselves to work as a precursor for flourishing.

So, as I close tonight, I hope I haven't gone over time otherwise Simon will give me the evil eye, I want to offer my very warm congratulations to WharfAbility, to Julie to David and others who do just a fantastic job in bringing together amazing people across the wharf and beyond to build fresh conversations about things that really keep purple talent awake at night.

Last, we launched a little advert PurpleSpace and this is the professional development hub, first of its kind for network leaders and we are already welcoming our first

tranche of leaders to the hub by Christmas. It's very very exciting. We are keen, Julie, to help support your conversations, to facilitate, I suppose an innovation hub so we can accelerate this third phase of change across the UK. And we are looking to build the right types of tool kits for individuals. As I say, I have waved this at you. David has brought them and they are in the foyer so I will stop the advert. Keep going, WharfAbility. You're doing a fabulous job in I suppose cranking up the purple wild fire. Keep going, so I will be with you.

{Applause}.

SIMON MINTY: Thank you so much Kate; that bit about being associated with the language is it's so good. You can have an impairment, a disability, a long term health condition, whatever you want to call it, and that's fine. It's only then I know when I start using a mobility scooter that was a shift, it was this bit of a kind of acknowledgment that it is a little bit more complex, a little more difficult and the big concern about how people will view me, so that kind of just coming out as it were almost. I remember seeing the advert for the Paralympics, the things for the warm up. I was petrified. My goodness, we had better make sure it is good now! You loved the arrogance of it, blimey! It was a good job you all came though which was great. It was about £10 a ticket. Nothing to do with it.

Okay. Thank you so much, Kate.

We have our final of the sort of more formal speakers. Again, great pleasure, this is Tab Ahmad. She's the founder and MD of Employability, which she will explain better than me but this is an agency that links both the disabled candidate and the organisation and gets that recruitment process to be as smooth as possible.

TAB AHMAD: Thank you, Simon. Thank you very much. So yes, I am the founder and managing director of Employability; I don't like calling ourselves an agency, but however...

SIMON MINTY: Sorry, it is the language.

TAB AHMAD: That's all right. Essentially we are a not for profit organisation that works with linking talented disabled university students and graduates in particular with employers who want to be inclusive and so much of what has already been said resonates really, really strongly, particularly when it comes to the language of disclosure or the language of letting

your employers know about a disability.

For us, that's very closely linked to what the purpose behind that actually is. But before I go into that, I guess I have been working in the space for about 15 years or so now, quite a long time, and it's also resonating the time we are talking about, the changes that have taken place in that time. I know when I first started working in this area I was knocking on employers' doors trying to persuade them to entertain disabled students and graduates. There wasn't much interest. There wasn't really much interest. It was all about other strands of diversity. And disability was a very poor cousin, but over that time period that has shifted. That is changing more and more. Employers are seeing the value of having talented disabled university students and graduates within their work force.

So I guess what we do and the reason we set up is because there is a real gap between having kind of people at university level who then found it very, very difficult to transition from education to employment and what we found was that either they were staying in education for ever and a day; it is a safer world; they know all about the adjustments at university, they know how to access those, or they were applying for roles but not getting through the process because there were inherent barriers in place and they couldn't get through the process; they didn't know how to negotiate that process and they didn't know how to tell the employer about the disability; they didn't know how to ask for adjustments or what adjustments to ask for and they were really worried about that, so they pitched themselves with incapacities and whilst there were lots of support organisations around perhaps supporting people with perhaps more severe disabilities or perhaps older or younger, there was a real gap in the support that was offered to talented disabled students and graduates. And I felt it was a really important piece of work to actually offer some support to them.

So we work with the universities across the UK and also across Europe in actually in offering a free service to this group of people to ensure they can access employment in the same way as non-disabled peers do. We run lots of skills workshops. We work with them to help them talk about adjustments. We talk to them about the language of disclosure, about how to actually go about that, but I suppose the key thing again, actually from what Kate said, is what the - is the purpose behind it. So many candidates we see worry about when can they tell the employer, how should they tell the

employer, should they tell the employer and how is it going to be perceived? Are they going to be discriminated against? Do they want to be different? They don't want to be seen to be different. You know, if we say to them, well, actually given your disability and given the impact it has on you, it may be you need certain adjustments in the process; maybe you need extra time if you have dyslexia, for example, to do tests. They kind of say to us "But I don't want to be treated differently, I don't want to be seen to be different". Well, that makes the employer think I am not good enough? And actually we know that certainly employers we work with who want to take this on board being very open about this aren't going to view it that way. But it's an effort to sometimes convince the candidate that is not going to be the case; that actually because they need extra time maybe because of their disability or something in a different format says nothing about their ability. It says nothing to the employer about what they can do. Just says what adjustments they need in the work place.

So really for us the focus very much on telling the employer has to be about whether the employer needs to know in a sense for the adjustment to take place. So instead of, you know, Kate was talking about softening the language. Instead of employers asking about a declaration, asking about a disclosure, simply what the employer can ask is about what adjustments can we put into place to make the process easier for you to perform well in? And that language is a bit different because then the employer is saying, how can we actually help you to do the best of your ability, rather than tell us so we might want, you know, and which makes me think, how do you use that information if I tell them. So making it very clear why you are asking for the information about asking in a softer way I think is certainly good thing to do.

Some of the other things that have come up is education. Educating employers, educating the work force and I think that's key as well. So we run lots of disability awareness training sessions for employers and for recruiters actually, so that we can teach recruiters how to screen in rather than screen out of the process, and what I mean by that is if somebody has a disability they have taken on in education, or they didn't get the grades they were expecting to get because their disability impaired them from doing that, or perhaps they didn't have the right support available to them, then it makes sense for recruiters to take that into account. That could be another reason to tell the employer about your disability because your profile looks different from that which they typically recruit in.

So we want the recruiters to be able to understand if somebody explains why perhaps their grades are different, explain perhaps why they took longer to complete their degree, maybe why they haven't got the same work experience that others have. It might help for them to understand that that says nothing about the person's ability. What it says is really that perhaps they can take that into account when screening and not screening that person out of the process.

So those sorts of things are very, very important to us and one of the ways that or some of the ways in which we actually try to help employers to make sure that their processes have less barriers, if you like, for people with different types of disabilities is we work with employers to help market and promote internships and graduate programmes that they already have, that they already run existing programmes, but to ensure that the adjustments part of that can actually be fitted into that process; to ensure that they can shout about why it is they want to hire more talented disabled students and graduates, because you might be doing all right internally, but what are you doing externally. As Yvonne said, please do shout about the work that you are doing; do talk to Yvonne and her team and to others who can help you market what you are doing internally because it might be fabulous stuff but how do people know about it? And I think messaging what you are doing, if you are doing something fabulous internally or externally is really important. When we have had sessions that we have run at round table discussions or for certain sectors, etc.etc., and we have asked students that we have helped into employment, what was the thing, what was the thing that actually persuaded them to apply to a particular employer they are with? What things was it and what are the things that made them think, perhaps I won't apply to that employer? It wasn't just saying that or well, it was an equal employer, it was efficient, what are they doing? How can they evidence what they are doing? How convincing are they about being disability inclusive actually? Is it just something they are saying or is it something they are doing something about?

So, I guess, you know, what can you do to be one of those companies that gets it right? How do you go about it? I guess for me it is not about complicated and sometimes daunting policies. It's much more about putting in place some simple guidelines, and getting stuck into the real initiatives, start local before you go global I would say. Whatever you choose to do initially and an event or mentoring programmes, creating talent

pipe lines, whatever that may be, raising awareness, having barrier free processes, keep it small. If you haven't done anything before, keep it small internally because it is often easier if you call something a pilot. Publicise it well externally and internally. Get some senior level support. And make sure that your staff on the ground are prepared to be flexible and open to adjusting and adapting to new processes when it is required. And then just do it, I would say. You won't get it right, perfectly right every single time. People don't get it right, right from the beginning. There can be mistakes to be made and some of the common mistakes are things like assumptions that just because somebody with a particular disability, a particular adjustment, the next person with that needs the same adjustment the next week, which is not always the case. I've seen some nods around the room. It is not the case; each adjustment needs to be tailored to the individual's needs and how it impacts them. But you will learn much more from actually doing it and giving it a go than from the myriad of disasters that can take place from inertia and inaction. So start the journey somewhere, I would say, but do start that journey. Thank you.

{Applause} .

SIMON MINTY: Thank you very much, Tab. That has drawn the first part to a conclusion. I am going to ask the speakers to vacate the stage and our 3 -- is everyone here? Brilliant, if you 3 want to come up and switch places.

You have a hand held mic?

We are running a few minutes behind but that's okay. I will see if somehow I can magically -- you might be a couple of minutes over between now and when we finish.

You will have seen these 3 people have just joined me. We will have a conversation with them and find out about their history and then we will get the 3 speakers and have the most busiest stage ever and then open it up for a Q and A with you with everybody back on the panel. So thank you all 3 of you. I had very brief conversations with you last week to find out a bit of information, but to formally introduce them. So on my furthest away from me so as you're looking on the right hand end is James Gower from EY. And in the middle is Uzair Patel from Barclays, and next to me or nearest to me is Emily

Roe from BAML. If it's okay, I am going to start with you at the end James and in terms of working for EY, how did you end up there? And if it's okay with you I am trying to work out the best word - sharing something around your impairment, condition, disability, whatever you want to call it?

JAMES: Evening everyone, can you hear me okay? So I am James Gower. I am a manager here in EY in information security, basically means I am an IT geek, I suppose. I came from university studying a maths degree, realised I wanted to be in the big wide world of work and actually got an opportunity through the Shaw Trust, which is a company that used to exist alongside --

SIMON MINTY: Sorry James, is that on? Or is it just my rubbish hearing? Can you hear at the back?

FROM THE FLOOR: No, not really.

SIMON MINTY: Can we see if it's on and can we get it turned up? I am guessing it will be behind that hidden mirror. They detect people!

Go again.

JAMES: Is that better for everyone at the back? Helen, you can't hear me?

SIMON MINTY: It still needs to be louder.

JAMES: Okay. I will keep talking until it feels like it's loud enough. Okay. Better? I will speak up, so sorry for raising --

SIMON MINTY: If not, you can read the palantype words behind your head, so you are okay.

JAMES: Yes, better? There you go. That's better. Perfect.

So yeah, I am James Gower, been with the firm for four and a half years or so. Very visibly I suffer from cerebral palsy. I have had that since being born 11 weeks premature. So it's always been a part of my life and reflecting on some of the conversations from the other 3 fantastic speakers, I have had a lot longer I suppose than most people to come to terms with my disability. But I have used that to my advantage. I think it differentiates - I think it creates a unique situation of perception of challenge, and with the support of EY for the last four years or so, I have been able to show our own internal staff and our external clients the abilities of disability I suppose. That's what I like to do. Like I

say it is not my day job, I do stuff in IT, we are dealing with people that have potentially no concept of disability on a day-to-day level, so that is a challenge. But it is about, you know, changing perceptions and being very clear that your disability doesn't affect your ability to do a certain job and if it did, adjustments would be put in place to make it possible to do that job as well if not better than the next person.

SIMON MINTY: Thank you.

JAMES: Does that answer your question?

SIMON MINTY: It was an introduction, your introduction. So Uzair.

UZAIR: My name is Uzair. The easiest way to remember that is: Knock, knock who's there? I use myself --

SIMON MINTY: Wait until next year!

UZAIR: I read biomedical sciences at King's College London, graduated in 2011; rather strangely I went and worked as Parliamentary researcher to the shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills before joining Barclays, so nothing related to my degree whatsoever. But I have been at Barclays for three years, so initially as a finance grad and now as a product controller of the investment bank. In terms of disability, from the about late 2010 to late 2013 I suffered quite seriously from depression, which for someone who studied neuro sciences still came as a shock. But I only realised that actually when one day on holiday I sort of had a series of panic attacks and I came very close to committing suicide. And I gave myself the option at that moment to either go through with it or actually try to seek help and be very honest with myself and those around me that I did need help and had a problem and something that could be solved or resolved and from that time I guess I, you know, was honest with myself. I sought help through the NHS, I disclosed to work or shared information with work, and also through that I guess I recovered. I have been actively involved in our business meetings campaigns, "This is Me", which is a mental health campaign and pandisability campaign and I think a lot of people get tired of me now because I am on panels all the time, and that's it really.

EMILY: Thank you. Hello, everyone. I am Emily Roe and I do FX sales at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. I have been there for now two years and I joined the graduate scheme two years ago January, very kindly from Employability. They were absolutely

incredible the whole way through. Yes, so I did economics and finance at Queen Mary University and I am now the co-chair of the Disability Advocacy Network at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. I have dyslexia, which I didn't realise until university and someone said to me, you know what, they pay for a dyslexia test, you might as well have a go. Came out of there, I did have dyslexia and it was hugely beneficial I found out at that time point in time just before my finals and also I've only got one arm. So I have only got my right arm and it's cut off from my left hand side so from the elbow. But I was born with this so I have lived with this throughout my life. I know how to deal with difficult situations, but worth going into the work force one thing I found noticeable is the fact that people are - people respect the fact that no one is used to people with disabilities and it's really the physical - it is not the physical ones, it is mental ones which people find so difficult. I still find it difficult to come to terms with the fact that I have a disability. I don't - I feel perfectly normal and Bank of America has been fantastic in putting the adjustments in place to make me feel as normal because, like Tab was saying, people don't like to be different. That is the first thing I said when I walked in. I don't want to be different. I don't want to sit in a different row to everyone else. I want everyone to be aware and just have the different sort of process in place to not being excluded. I am no different in any means. I just need to have that adjustment to make sure I am on the same, like, ground level as everyone else.

So yeah. Have I covered everything?

SIMON MINTY: Keep hold of the mic, I have got my own, and you can sort of pass it between you if that's okay.

I have the privilege of asking a few questions before we are going to open it up to you.

There is so much interesting stuff going on with you guys. The bit that strikes me is that kind of distinction between being born with and acquiring, having something visible and not visible. I should just make one little proviso, I am not going to talk to you at all about work because I am assuming you are great at your jobs; you are in your jobs, that's a given. So as you said, certainly you've become a bit of a poster girl or boy for disability and that's what we want to talk about this evening, so the given is the competency.

How do you 3 feel in terms of, I suppose I am thinking of different situations, whether it be applying for university, whether it's applying for jobs, whether it is a social situation? You are clearly confident around it, but how do you play that bit about telling people, letting people know and I think the bit that Kate mentioned that sort of that dance you can sometimes do about spotting good organisations and who aren't? That is a very blurred question. Does that make any sense?

UZAIR: Yes. Okay. So I guess mine was slightly different from, perhaps, the other responses in that I only found out whilst being employed at Barclays a lot later on, so I wasn't - it wasn't there necessarily when I was conscious of this idea of disclosure and speaking to my employers, but at the time I did come to the conclusion I needed to be very honest with myself. I think perhaps being a sort of the typical male, I didn't acknowledge I had a problem or illness. I thought I was very independent and self-sufficient. I just ploughed through, but eventually I realised I needed to ask for help if I was to resolve my depression and just be open and honest about it. So, when I did get diagnosed with depression from my GP I organised a meeting with my HR manager, which I was very, very nervous to do. When I did tell her I had depression, the first thing she said was: "Is that all? I thought you were going to leave the company!", which was wonderfully reassuring, that they just - they were happy to keep me and I would be there, because I was just totally afraid that once you are hired on a grad scheme that somehow you are no longer a future leader if you have something wrong, a disability or a mental health issue. Then I brought in everyone I thought needed to know, so my programme managers, my line managers, the chief of staff who's a sponsor and what was really reassuring is that when I did disclose, everyone there had some sort of experience with a mental health issue. So all five people there; there was a wife with postnatal depression, a partner with depression, a {Inaudible} with depression, there was an individual actually suffering with depression post divorce. So, it was actually a brilliant moment to actually be in that moment and feel that one, yes I can get better; these people suffer themselves and they have got better and two, that I can actually be seen here, it is not going to affect my career in any way. They didn't change their impression of me and, if anything, it enhanced the impression of me I think. They definitely thought I was brave to come in and do that.

So and since they have always been very helpful. They were very open with me. I spoke about the things I wanted. I was initially offered leave, I guess if I wanted to take some sick leave, but it was important for me to stay at work and I quite like work, which is why I'm here on my birthday.

SIMON MINTY: It's your birthday?

UZAIR: Yes, we will sing "Happy Birthday" later!

SIMON MINTY: Okay.

UZAIR: Being on the finance grad scheme, I work in the evenings and Saturdays and Sundays and I go to college to become an accountant. So actually I was - I said it would be useful actually if I could just focus on working myself rather than the accountancy qualification, so I was able to defer that and I initially said, you know, I will go and see a psycho therapist, just take my lunch break and I got told, no, you will go and see the psycho therapist and you will take the lunch break for lunch and it was brilliant because my line manager said at ten o'clock he will take me to the gym and we would go and have lunch together and then I would go and see the psycho therapist; very accommodating and helpful and I think, you know, it has really helped in terms of within six months I was officially, according to my psycho therapist, that I no longer had depression so it was just very quick, didn't affect the company in any way whatsoever and I am able to have a fulfilled career.

EMILY: Erm, one thing that I found I have definitely learned is being as honest as possible and disclosing everything right at the very beginning, because people - because one thing I found is you are so petrified about what other people are going to think, other people are going to judge you, you hide it, you cover it, you struggle, you struggle and struggle, but then there is no need to. All people want you - people are desperate to help you; you've just got to give them the ability to be able to help you. So you've got to provide them with what is wrong with you, where they can give you assistance and how and I can't even emphasise the amount of people I talked to and they never know how to disclose back *{Inaudible}*. It is scary in a way, people talk to you and say: "So what do you need to be put in place?" And you think, Oh, I am really sorry, you're going to have to do this and in, like, I have got this, but actually no, you should never ever feel like that. It should be there. It should be the

norm and it should be in place already if you have got a slight disability that's not particularly common or that you've just been diagnosed with it, let them know. Because you will find life is so much, so much easier and you can really, really thrive if you have got those particular adjustments in place if you disclose. That's something I found. One of the things I just wanted to mention is when you've got a physical disability which is quite obvious and people can see it and they can sort of pick up on it; you might not have a mental disability, you might not think you have a mental disability, but if you sit there struggling with a physical disability it will and it could, not will, it could create a mental disability. I found many people who have been - they have been in an accident and become physically disabled, it then spiralled out of control and they haven't accepted it and it has gone into a mental disability. And that is where I find it really becomes quite dangerous because then they don't disclose it because they don't admit to themselves they have got it. If you just accept that you've got this initial physical disability at the onset, people are there to help; people have got things in place; you've got people you can talk to; people will open up to you as well as you opening up to them and where they might not have had anyone they could open up to before and you put that barrier there, like, preventing it from spiralling out of control, so that will be my - that's one thing I have learned.

JAMES: Yeah, I would really echo that. I think having a very physical, very obvious disability I wanted to make sure that the likes of EY my employer really got what I needed, so really understood that, okay, I might need another lap top to have at home; I might not be able to take the tube to get around everywhere, but actually working for a consultancy the challenge is: Do our clients understand that if I am going to be seconded out to a large investment bank or a big insurance company, how will they deal with disability? I got some great advice from a partner not too long ago because I was concerned around what consultancy meant and actually disabled people have a fantastic impact. I think it went back to the point that Kate made around low expectations almost, that I can walk into a client with my two sticks, wobble along and immediately there is a perception around how I can do my job potentially and how I can manage a team, how I can do day-to-day things that would affect how they would want me as a consultant coming in and advising our organisation, and what a great opportunity to really show case what we can do. My girlfriend put it

wonderfully, bless her, she said, ultimately, they are - they will look at you, think you might be a bit crap, but when you are okay, they will think you are great! She's now my fiancé! I think it's about realising that we can use that to our advantage. We are quite modest in the fact we just need a few adjustments, need people to understand how we can go about our day-to-day normal existences and work and then it is up to us to help us flourish and help us succeed. We just need a bit of support along the way, maybe a little bit more support, but, you know, a reasonable amount of support.

SIMON MINTY: I absolutely get that bit, that initial impression. I went to a personal development programme for staff who have a disability within a government agency and when we talk about body language and impact and that sort of stuff, we have to be smart when it comes to a disability that is something visible and the flip side of that is it is a huge advantage, you're right, and also you get about a minute and they are petrified of you. So you can get away with anything and as, you know, off you go!

I have got a few more questions, but I did ask specifically when I spoke to our panel last week whether there was a, maybe a kind of an important story, whether it was a funny one or a difficult example of something that they have had along the way. Did you guys think of anything? You're suddenly looking quite blankly at me. Do you have anything?

JAMES: I can go first if that helps?

UZAIR: I think I used enough in my intro.

JAMES: Yeah. For me it is kind of every day this can happen and I think a lot of people view, especially around some mobility challenges which things are obvious and I know I reiterate that, but that's kind of my core disability. I do have some hidden disabilities, but I feel less comfortable around, but ultimately whether it's a physical disability people want to help and they think they know ways to help and that can be as much as grabbing my arm to help me cross the road when I wasn't even looking to cross the road and it can then be that discomfort that people feel; they don't know what to do in a situation. Should they offer me a seat or take that bag for me and maybe it is because I have had longer to come to terms with my disability. I feel confident enough to be vocal and say, this is what I need, this is what I don't need and actually I don't misinterpret their offers of kindness for rudeness or

ignorance, because people are in most parts trying to help. It is very rare that someone will call me a bad word or be nasty to me and, let's face it, I probably have just been nasty to them anyway. So I might deserve their response. So I think it is about knowing that disability is such a small part of other people's world, even though it's the centre of my world sometimes, they might not even recognise it. I was on the stand this evening greeting a lot of you. Thank you for your patience and understanding, which we're still coming to terms in how we greet such a large number of people into our organisation at one time. But actually that for me is about interaction. I don't know whether you noticed that I clearly had a physical disability but that didn't matter; it was - my role was to hopefully correctly assign you a name badge, if we had one for you, and escort you to get to the 20th floor. So I think sometimes it is about taking disability to one side and saying, these are my exposures and experiences, they strengthen me. Then let's push on and spread the word that it is not a negative thing all the time.

That long enough for you to think of a - -

UZAIR: I have forgotten the question!

SIMON MINTY: I am really conscious I had one last question. If it's okay I am going to bring the panel up. That last bit I wanted to check - networks, staff networks - let me try and explain. I met some people who may work for an organisation, have a disability and they avoid it and they avoid the network because that is alarm bells; 2, the perception is that's the group who are all moaning or it's the group who are really struggling and, you know, a few networks may be. When Kate gets there they start improving, but those who have cracked it, you go along and you meet people and identify they are the ones who are a bit more sorted because they have come to terms with it. They are ready to talk about it and I am just interested in terms of joining networks, being part of a WharfAbility whether it's your own internal networks, the positive side of that? And it could be a negative as well, you're allowed it.

EMILY: Like I mentioned earlier, I am one of the few networks but I'm in a network called the Disability Advocacy and when I first joined I was a bit hesitant about becoming a part of it and I thought it was a bit, you know, I will give it a few months and then maybe we will see what's going on in the network and I signed up and some of the people I met - I mean, it

was full of such an enormously diverse range of people, not only people with disabilities themselves but their children have got disabilities or they have never even come across a disability and they happen to somehow manage someone with a disability, so they want to learn more about it. And I do find now being the co-chair, sometimes actually when you try and sort of talk about it, promote events that you are hosting, people sort of, people sort of look at it and go, why? What is the point of these networks? Like, who is involved in them? And actually they are such an incredible thing to have in an institution because they bring people together and they open it up and increase that transparency that needs to be, that sometimes some of the biggest hindrance at these big institutions is this transparency and it's the networks that really promote this awareness and this sort of need for inclusion and then gives these people the confidence to speak up and be vocal about it and at the network I spoke to this relatively senior person who gave me this advice; if you are speaking to your manager, so for example I went out for my first client meal about a year ago and at this stage I wasn't part of the network and I hadn't spoken to anyone about my disability. I went to a restaurant and told the client about my arm. We went to a steak restaurant, ordered one that I had to swallow the whole thing whole because it wasn't cut up, and it was a horrendous experience and it was the network that I was able to go back to and say talk to them and be transparent and say, look, this happened to me; what do I do? How do I go about this situation next? And one thing they said to me is you've got to realise your manager would have happily spoken to you, would have happily sat down with you, but did he know? No, because I didn't go and speak to him. Just because someone disabled up the road to me is quite happy to sort out everything themselves, doesn't mean you are. Everyone is so different with disability. Everyone wants to be approached differently and everyone wants to be communicated in a different way. Like you mentioned, some people might be hugely offended by you opening the door. I am perfectly fine, thank you very much. I will open the door myself, but some people are more than complimented if someone held the door open for me.

So it is just going back to I think networks are such an incredible thing to have and you are right; it is about changing people's perceptions around these networks, which is just absolutely vital, which is something I'm working on at the moment is just increasing awareness and knowledge of these networks. Yeah. That's it. Nothing negative.

UZAIR: Well, yeah, I echo everything that has been said. The wonderful thing about the networks is they are incredibly empowering to find like minded individuals and people who perhaps suffer from similar problems, to be able to have somewhere where we can discuss these things and perhaps learn best practice. I think one of the benefits of networks as well is when you do have a disability, it sort of changes your own perception of disability because you end up thinking of yourself more as an activist, you're alongside these groups of people and you actually want to make a change and it is a sort of two-way street. And I think one important idea is the very fact there is a network within an employer, a large employer, suggests to you that this is something that's going to be taken seriously and then having that network in itself means you can actually go and speak to people, find help and I guess we mentioned before our This Is Me campaign, which touches upon mental health and disability campaign now. But that arose I guess from conversations that we had with David and a few other people and just having those networks being able to reach out and gather people up. Suddenly we are able to create an award winning campaign that then got included and sponsored by senior managers and senior people and ended up being included in our entire HR programme. It has been rolled out and it's gone from I guess being the sort of network where, perhaps, you only really look for it if you do have a disability and you want to find information, to actually being something that is present throughout the bank. You don't necessarily need to have a disability, but you're aware now of our REACH network and our various campaigns. And that can only help in terms of our transparency and inform people who perhaps didn't really want people to know that they had a disability, or perhaps, you know, didn't feel necessarily it was necessary to share that information, but actually seeing that the campaign around banks, seeing the networks that are available and actually wanting to, actively wanting people to recruit and to join those campaigns and being an active enforcer in this just encourages the conversations and it makes for a brilliant two-way street in terms of sharing information with an employer, a receptive employer and employers around the bank as well.

SIMON MINTY: Thank you so much. Thank you to all of you. Can I ask our panelists to come back up? Could you bring your chairs or can someone bring your chair if that's possible? I am going to move up a little bit. I am very conscious that we are over time,

but maybe have a couple of minutes for questions and we can always carry on over drinks.

So you have Kate on my immediate left and then Tab and Yvonne in the middle, Emily sort of in the middle, Uzair and James at the end. That's okay, you're perfectly allowed to do that. I can't believe they are leaving! No, I am joking. *{Laughter}*. Thank you, sorry for being so late. Okay.

We are going to open it up to you. Do you have any questions for our fantastic panelists? We are going to bring the mic around. There is a question at the back?

FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. I have a question for Yvonne actually, specifically about the Disability Confident programme which I completely endorse and quite like how many people you've got into employment, but my concern arises where employers are more - I worry employers may be just ticking the box to say: I am part of Disability Confident because I can say I am part of it. So my question specifically now asks - what does the DWP do as a role, as a function, to ensure and implement that the Disability Confident programme is more than just ticking a box but implementing disability change across an organisation?

YVONNE O'HARA: Great question and --

SIMON MINTY: Can we get the mic --

YVONNE O'HARA: Yes, sure.

SIMON MINTY: You've got to make sure it's turned up.

YVONNE O'HARA: You can hear me okay? I feel like I am about to launch into karaoke, but I won't do that.

It is a really good question and I alluded to it when I was speaking but didn't go into detail, but one of the elements in terms of taking Disability Confident to the next level is exactly that, because arguably at the moment any employer could be Disability Confident really. However, of course that would never happen because the employers who tend to sign up are ones who either absolutely get that this is an issue, they either are on at the beginning of their journey in terms of improving outcomes for disabled people in terms of employment and retention, or they are recently well-established, or they want some help and support and come to us to talk about. So, the policy team in DWP are working at the

moment on a mechanism by which employers will be able to sign up using an on-line portal and there will be - what they are looking at at the moment is what those levels would be. So, for example, there would be a particular standard, arguably, because this is all for debate at the moment, particular standards for level 1; there would be particular standards for level 2, and particular standards for level 3 and of course there are existing mechanisms that exist through organisations like BDF and the care companies, so and work with the policy team are going to be working with organisations like that to make sure we get this right. So it is not something that is in place yet, but it's certainly something that in terms of my role in the marketing side a huge element of the campaign in 2016 will be about promoting that functionality and taking the campaign to the next level. I think it has done its job in terms of raising awareness and getting employers to amplify and talk about what they are doing, but I agree with you. This next element is about the bit that needs to be put in place to really give it some teeth.

FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.

SIMON MINTY: Another question, the gentleman on my far left?

FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. I am Chris Perry. I am from the public sector, Ministry of Justice, from a disability network there. It is a question for Kate really and I was interested in the outcome of the research part that was done. We have a very poor declaration rate in the Ministry of Justice and this has gone down significantly, so we can't even use it and I take all the points that you have made and I do feel that, you know, we need to find some way of - the real issue in our department in the public sector is people cannot and won't disclose their disability. It is a big challenge and I think we need to, well, we - the challenge for us as the public sector is how do we improve that? What can we learn from the private sector? So I would be interested to hear what your views are on that. I can't come to your next session, but it would be quite interesting to know what you think about that and how we could improve that?

KATE NASH: I feel your pain, I feel your pain. I think one of the unfortunate consequences of the deep public sector cuts that we have seen, and we have yet to see again, will have of course an impact on how people feel about sharing their personal information about disability and how their employer will receive that information. And, you know, so

MoJ was a really active member of our research. We applaud you for that. We got some fantastic data from your own people. In terms of what you can do - it is a tough ask. In terms of learning from the private sector, it needs to be I suppose more a, dare I say, more brazen about your own purple talents that you have within and across the organisation. And you have a very -- it is a very complex organisation. But you, you know, if you're able to find ways to highlight and profile the people who are not feeling able and confident to talk about their story, we are seeing that across the piece in the private sector and of course in the private sector, you know, there is a wee bit more money to do some delicious campaigns, but we are seeing some good examples in the private sector. Transport for London is one of them -- sorry, the Department for Transport and ONS, in that there are some really good cost effective campaigns for spot lighting and role modelling --

FROM THE FLOOR: I remember the positive images campaign. So we have done something like that, but we are just trying to build on that, and--

KATE NASH: Of course, what we want to do is cross fertilise ideas. We think we are going to be doing that, we know we are going to do it in a cost effective way. It's still a cost, but for £300 a year to invest in a network leader, to be able to talk to our network with other network leaders like your good self and share resources and ideas, etc.etc., I think we will see some interesting things, but the short answer is I feel your pain.

SIMON MINTY: Yes, there is a lady on my far right waving her hand?

FROM THE FLOOR: Somebody just talked about the figures about disability and how employers can perhaps measure that. We know from our own employer at the moment that there is the feeling that we cannot log the statistics for the people that are disabled or what kind of disabilities that they have, so part of that is because people don't want to disclose some information, but some of that is because it is a little bit of the unknown about how we should or could register those numbers and what and even if it is not just numbers, are we able to register what those disabilities are. So is there some kind of legality around that or are we just being too fearful and too cautious? I don't know who to put that to, but if anyone knows the answer that will be wonderful.

KATE NASH: I mean, some organisations have inherited the duty to monitor, certainly the public sector. Our experience with Secrets and Big News, I mean, I will be so bold to say that there are very, very few employers that are ever going to get accurate data, I just don't think it's possible. Now I would like to be proven wrong and, you know, seeing the speakers just before us which is the warm up act, you know, a testament to people who are choosing to be authentic themselves at work, and over time we are going to see certainly young disabled people that have grown up with the legislation feel more confident and able to be beautifully assumptive about what employers will deliver because they just feel it, why wouldn't they, to be talented but going back to your question - I think if you don't monitor or it is problematic I would say look in different places. Look at the amount of times you make a work place adjustment to make a good guess as to how many people will have a disability. Look at the people who are gravitating to your network. Look in different places to start to see where the stats line up. I don't know, that's the first punt. Who else would like to have a crack at that?

TAB AHMAD: I think we often get asked that question by employers and I think the difficulty, certainly at the point where somebody is applying for a role, is that I guess an employer - a change in the law, you can't necessarily ask if somebody has a disability in the same way that you might have been able to before. But I guess what you can do is ask what adjustments somebody needs and for me in terms of the recruitment side, the more important question is what adjustments does somebody need? So I think you have to be clear about why do you need to have that piece of information, what do you want to do with that piece of information. I think there is some clarity around how you are going to use that information, what you are going to do with this information if there is a good reason to have that information and it's okay to have it because actually, so far as adjustments are concerned, without that piece of information, you can't make the adjustments. So, if you are asking because you need to know to enable someone to perform to the best of their ability, you want to make the adjustments in the work place, then I think you need to be able to ask that question and to be able to have that recorded somewhere so if that person changes roles or moves on, you know that that needs to follow them in that process, as well as again one of the big things that happens is that people working in a particular division and they change roles and actually the next place they go to doesn't know and they have to tell the employer

all over again or their new manager again about what adjustments they need.

SIMON MINTY: Just an add on point. A client of mine found, which isn't unique to them, that when they did their employee engagement survey the scores of those who reported disability or long term health condition were lower than those who, the counterparts who didn't. What they said was we need to find out a way, so they send a big man out saying: "Will you come and talk to us?", and what they found was a hell of a lot of people identified, self-identified to come and report back in what the difficulties were with the organisation. And they were saying, "This is thrilling. We are finding out about managers we didn't know, people in remote offices we didn't know". When they were asked to input to see how we can do it better, they started to declare or come forward or share, if that's the right word.

You probably all want a drink and a little bit of food. Are all of our panelists around for the next ten or 15 minutes? So okay, that was mostly nods. So if you want to ask them something or carry on that conversation, please do come and find them. If I could ask you to give a round of applause? *{Applause}*.

For my own part, a big thank you to Julie and to David from WharfAbility for all their organisational skills and bringing it all together and thank you so much for your great opening and hosting and a big thank you to all of you who have come along. I hope you found it engaging and useful and I hope to see you soon. Thank you.

{Applause}.

{Concluded}

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