House of Commons
Work and Pensions Committee

Assistive technology

Tenth Report of Session 2017–19

Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report

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Work and Pensions Committee

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Contents

Summary

Assistive Technology (AT) already makes a huge difference to the lives of disabled people. It helps them live more independently and enables many to work. But it has vast untapped potential. Advances in technology mean AT is developing and improving rapidly. It could have a transformative impact on the disability employment gap and is, in turn, a huge opportunity to boost productivity. These possibilities will only be realised if employers, government and disabled people themselves fully understand and exploit its life-changing capacities.

"Assistive technology" once meant expensive, specialist equipment. Today, AT is increasingly mainstream, often as technology primarily designed for the convenience of all. It is integrated in everyday computers, phones and gadgets. It helps disabled people make phone calls, send emails and texts, and access the internet—all on technologies they often already own. The Apple iPhone alone contains a host of AT features as standard. VoiceOver reads out text from the screen on command, aiding visually impaired people. FaceTime enables remote visual communication such as British Sign Language (BSL). Switch Control controls the phone without touch; an invaluable option for people with motor difficulties. At no additional cost, these technologies open up work and society.

Too often, disabled people and employers continue to perceive AT as costly, bespoke equipment. Government has a key role in changing those perceptions of AT, not just out of compassion but in the national economic interest. But its role is not simply to raise awareness. Development of assistive technology is currently stunted by outdated attitudes. Tapping the potential of disability employment, and assistive technology in particular, are the epitome of the Government's industrial strategy of creating a modern, dynamic economy. In its Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, it has a ready means of offering financial incentives to support entrepreneurship. But rapid innovation and mass-marketisation of assistive technology will only happen if the Government makes concerted efforts to stimulate entrepreneurship and focus on driving forward advances in assistive technology. In missing AT from the "Grand Challenges" that Challenge Fund applicants must address, it has missed a trick. The Government should create a new Assistive Technology "Grand Challenge". At no additional cost, this would permit funding the development of a broader range of assistive technology than is possible via the current Challenges. The Department should then bring together a consortium of AT developers and entrepreneurs, users, employers and support providers to bid for funding under this Challenge.

The cost of AT is a barrier to some disabled people improving their quality of life. Specialist AT can cost thousands of pounds. Even mainstream equipment—such as a basic smartphone—can be unaffordable for disabled people on low incomes. Yet a lack of AT can leave disabled people isolated—including being unable to access the internet and the many opportunities that brings. The Department should allow Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants to lease or buy AT using their award. This is the same principle used for claimants to lease cars. This would make AT available to

disabled people who might not otherwise be able to afford it, at no additional cost to the taxpayer. The Department need not administer the scheme, but should ensure that whatever company does works in line with the principles of providing a public service.

AT could transform the employment prospects of disabled people. It can enable them to do jobs that would otherwise be impossible. It can also be vital to allowing them to demonstrate skills to employers. But unemployed disabled people have limited opportunities to learn about and use AT. The Department should train its Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers on how AT—especially the low-cost variety—can support disabled claimants, and should encourage Work Coaches to refer claimants to external specialist AT support. It should also encourage local AT support organisations to tender their services via the Flexible Support Fund.

Employer awareness of AT is an obstacle to disability employment and, ultimately, improving productivity. Helping employers understand what AT can do—often at little or no additional cost—would reassure many of their concerns about taking on and retaining disabled workers. The Department should develop this understanding by making AT advice and information a substantial part of its planned Disability Confident employer portal.

The DWP—and other Departments—should themselves act as model employers. But civil service computer systems are often not fully accessible to AT users. This is despite all Departments being signed up to the Disability Confident scheme as "Leaders"; the highest level of accreditation. The Department should raise its expectations of Disability Confident employers with regards to AT. It should introduce AT-specific qualifying criteria at all three levels. At Leader level, organisations should demonstrate a commitment to procuring inclusive systems. Government should lead the way by doing this for all new IT procurement from April 2019. It should also create a central standard for AT-compatible systems in government Departments and task Disability Confident with producing an annual report and "league table" on compliance to further incentivise improvement.

AT holds enormous promise for disabled peoples' employment. But it is not yet advanced enough to replace human, one-to-one support in all circumstances—especially where people need full-time interpreters or support workers. These can be very expensive. The Department had planned to systematically apply a cap on Access to Work claims for all users from April 2018. This would have a been a mistake. Lifting the cap shows the Department is willing to listen to evidence. We welcome this decision.

But there is more to do in Access to Work. The programme provides vital funding for adjustments and support that help disabled people stay in work. Over half of Access to Work users currently benefit from funded aids and equipment, including AT. The scheme is not, however, as cost-effective as it could be. Some assessors remain wedded to recommending specialist equipment. Mainstream alternatives are often cheaper and just as good. Microsoft Windows' magnification option, for example, performs the same function as specialist magnification software. The latter can cost hundreds or thousands of pounds; the former is free. The Department needs to ensure assessors consistently recommend the latest and best value equipment. It should review and amend assessor training, introducing new, structured professional development requirements. It should

also review its support for AT training in Access to Work. Currently this is offered by specialist equipment providers only, further binding assessors to those providers and their equipment. The Department should introduce a new, general "Access to Work (training)" option. This would provide AT training not linked to receiving specific equipment, opening up the market for AT training and driving down costs. Some users would be trained to use technologies they already own, further reducing costs to the Department.

The Department must work hard to make certain that disabled people—in or out of work—and employers are fully aware of and able to benefit from all that AT has to offer. It must put AT at the centre of its entire approach to supporting disability employment and boosting the economy: from Jobcentre Plus to the Industrial Strategy. If it does so, it will discover an unparalleled opportunity to make real progress in closing the disability employment gap and resolving the UK's productivity deadlock.

1   Assistive technology and the disability employment gap

1.   Assistive technology (AT) supports and enhances the independence of disabled people and those with health conditions. It can support people to do daily tasks, be more mobile and participate more fully in society and in employment.[1] AT comes in many different forms. It can be highly specialised and designed to overcome a specific impairment or difficulty, such as embossing machines that can produce hard copies of information in braille. It can also be built into phones, laptops and daily living gadgets.[2] Apple's iPhone, for example, comes with VoiceOver/"blind assist" mode (reading out words on the screen), FaceTime (allowing visual communication, such as British Sign Language), Switch Control (operating the phone without touch), and the ability to receive Textphone calls without specialist hardware.[3] Advances in technology have driven, and continue to drive, cutting edge advances in AT. These are increasingly integrated with mainstream devices, driving down costs and improving accessibility for disabled people.[4]

2.   In its response to the *Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability* consultation, the Government pledged to increase the number of disabled people in work by one million by 2027.[5] Disabled people have much lower employment rates than non-disabled people. 49.2% of disabled people are in work, compared to 80.6% of non-disabled people: a gap of 31.4 percentage points.[6] Although the number of disabled people in employment has risen by around 600,000 since 2013, progress on reducing the gap has been slow.[7] Since 2015 the gap has narrowed by just 2.7 percentage points.[8] Our predecessor Committee's report on the *Disability employment gap* found Government will struggle to close the gap without providing sufficient high quality, specialist support for disabled people seeking and in work. It also highlighted the urgent need for cultural change amongst employers, transforming outdated and self-defeating attitudes towards hiring and retaining disabled employees.[9]

3.   The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP/The Department) told us AT could contribute to producing this change. Sarah Newton MP, Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (the Minister) told us technological advances hold "the most enormous potential" for disabled people and those with health conditions.[10] The Department explained it is "keen to make best use of technology which can provide crucial support to remove barriers to work". It suggested AT "is making it cheaper and easier than ever

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1   All- Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (AST0035), Abilitynet (AST0024), Sense (AST0026), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), IBM (AST0031), Inclusion London (AST0016), The Shaw Trust and Disability Living Foundation (AST0027), Orcam (AST0018)

2   The Shaw Trust and Disability Living Foundation (AST0027), Orcam (AST0018), Inclusion London (AST0016), Association of Disabled Professionals and START ability services (AST0015)

3   Apple (AST0037)

4   WAIS accessibility team University of Southampton (AST0019), Abilitynet (AST0024), The Shaw Trust (AST0039), Microsoft (AST0021), Google (AST0038), Apple (AST0037)

5   DWP, Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability, November 2017, p.3

6   Brown, J. and Powell, A. People with disabilities in employment, House of Commons Library, January 2018

7   Brown, J. and Powell, A. People with disabilities in employment. Between April to June 2013 and April to June 2017 the number of people with disabilities in employment increased by around 596,000.

8   Brown, J. and Powell, A. People with disabilities in employment.

9   Work and Pensions Committee, Disability employment gap, Seventh report of Session 2016–2017, HC 56, January 2017

10   Q439 (Sarah Newton)

before" for employers to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to get into and remain in work.[11] DWP has three main programmes that could support disabled people and their employers to make use of AT:[12]

i) **Disability Confident** is the Government's flagship scheme for encouraging employers to take on and retain disabled employees and providing advice and guidance on how best to do so.[13]

ii) **Jobcentre Plus** provides support for disabled people who are out of work. Under Universal Credit it will also support low-paid claimants who are in work. The support on offer includes referrals to specialist advice and support.[14]

iii) **Access to Work** supports disabled people in work by funding support workers, transport costs, aids and adaptations that help them do their jobs.[15]

4. Our predecessor Committee's report on the Disability employment gap made recommendations to improve employer attitudes and access to specialist support. This inquiry sought to focus on the specific role that AT could play in closing the gap. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the inquiry. In the text our conclusions are set out **in bold**, and our recommendations, which require a government response, are set out in ***bold italic***. The summary, conclusions and recommendations of our report are also available in audio, Easy Read, British Sign Language, and as a Word document, to ensure accessibility for all.

11   DWP, Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability, November 2017, p.10
12   DWP, Disability employment gap: Government response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17,Third special report of session 2017–19, HC 652, December 2017
13   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign, July 2014
14   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus , March 2018
15   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work, March 2018

2   Specialist vs mainstream assistive technology

5.   AT has traditionally been developed by small suppliers for users with specific impairments.[16] Increasingly, however, mainstream technology companies are producing their own AT. This comes in a range of forms:

  i)   AT can be built into phones, tablets and computers. Standard everyday devices have built-in screen readers, helping those with visual impairments, while using voice commands can help those with dexterity difficulties.[17] Mainstream companies catering for the general consumer market, including Microsoft, Apple, Google and Amazon, all offer this kind of AT in their products (see Figure 1).[18]

Figure 1: Built-in accessibility menus on Apple, Android and Windows

Colour picture graphic. Shows (from left to right) the outline of the Apple, Windows and Android smartphones. Each phone is black, the background of the graphic is white. The screen of each phone shows part of their accessibility menu. Each accessibility menu lists screen reading, magnification, and increased font size options.

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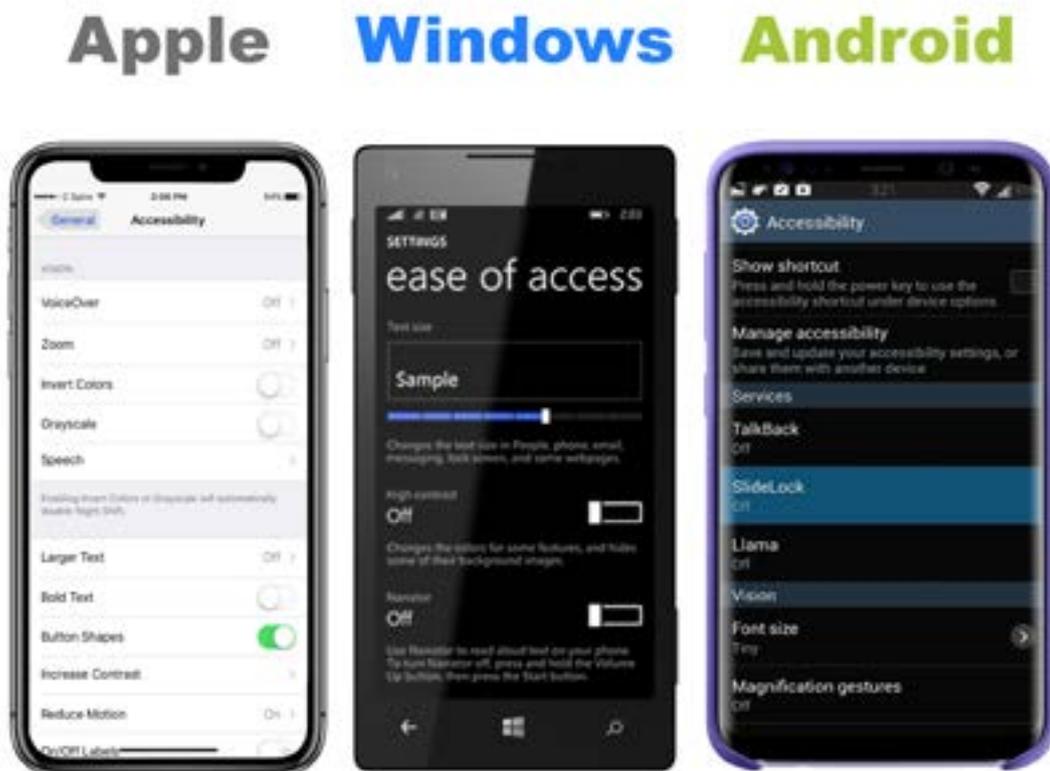
16   Abilitynet (AST0024), Scope (AST0009)
17   WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019). See also: Apple (AST0037), Google (AST0038), Microsoft (AST0021)
18   WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Abilitynet (AST0024), Google (AST0038), Apple (AST0037), Microsoft (AST0021), DWP (AST0032), Sense (AST0026), Scope (AST0009), Association of Disabled professionals and START Ability Services (AST0015), Jisc (AST0010)

ii) New mainstream technologies can double as AT for disabled people. Facetime, a video call option on the iPhone, enables D/deaf people to speak to each other in BSL. The Amazon Echo smart speaker can perform tasks (such as turning on the TV or closing curtains) that disabled people may otherwise find difficult.[19]

iii) AT apps are being developed to overcome specific difficulties or impairments. Microsoft's Seeing AI, a free artificial intelligence app, helps visually impaired people identify people and objects using their mobile phone camera.[20] How Do I?, a free app for young people with learning disabilities, offers step-by-step guidance on completing work and daily tasks, such as tagging a product in a shop or making a cup of tea (see Figure 2 and Case study 1).[21]

Figure 2: An Ikea worker using How Do I?

Colour photo from behind of a person in an Ikea uniform holding a Samsung phone in their right hand and a product tag in their left. On the phone screen is the How Do I? App. The app is showing a video of a women and man, also wearing Ikea uniforms talking. The video is labelled 'How to price tag a product'.

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19   Abilitynet (AST0024), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Inclusion London (AST0016), Association of Disabled Professionals and START Ability Services (AST0015), John Welsman (AST0013), Apple (AST0037), Milton Keynes Council (AST0011)

20   All- Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (AST0035), Hft (AST0030), Ideas for Ears (AST0029), AbilityNet (AST0024), Business Disability Forum (AST0023)

21   How Do I? (AST0014)

Case study 1: Eve

> Eve has mental health difficulties. She uses Brain in Hand, an app on her mobile phone which helps her to "remember activities, reduce anxiety and feel safe". The diary and time prompts on the app help Eve get up, prepare for work and arrive on time. They remind her of appointments, meetings and supervision and help plan and prepare for change. After using Brain in Hand for a period of time, Eve's independence has increased, her anxiety reduced and her ability to cope with change has improved.

Source: Hft- A national charity for adults with learning disabilities (AST0030)

6.   These developments are making AT more accessible and inclusive than ever before. This is in part because they are much cheaper than traditional AT. Specialist, bespoke products can be very expensive. Screen reading software for blind and visually impaired people, for example, can cost up to £1,000. Hardware is often even more costly.[22] In contrast, mainstream AT often incurs no or little additional cost beyond the cost of the device or computer, which many people will already own or use at work. This reduces the financial barriers to using AT. We heard the quality and availability of this kind of AT will only improve. Hector Minto, Technology Evangelist at Microsoft told us about the process of putting face recognition and eye control options into Windows 10.[23] He explained that this was technology that previously cost "thousands of pounds":

> *I used to work in that field, and the reason that it cost thousands of pounds was that the cost of sale was thousands of pounds, not the nuts and bolts themselves. We think that technology has huge possibilities in many applications, so we are working with that manufacturer to get that cost down to £150 to get eye control on a computer.*

7.   We also heard about Natasha, a visually impaired person in full-time employment, who explained that: "when I first got a mobile phone aged 11, I had to get my mum to read my texts". Fifteen years later, Natasha is using a fully accessible touch screen phone. This puts her "on a level playing field" with sighted peers, with access to the "same information and technology, out of the box with no additional hefty price tag" (see also Case study 2, below).[24] AT in this form helps disabled people make phone calls, send emails, access the internet and write documents—all through adaptations to the same technology most people use every day.[25] Robin Christopherson, Head of Digital Inclusion at AbilityNet, a specialist advice and information service for disabled people explained that "ten or fifteen years ago (AT) was the domain of the specialist". Now mainstream technologies designed as a convenience for able bodied people "are the difference between life opportunities or work opportunities" for disabled people.[26]

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22   Specialist Screen Reader ,Dragon Speech to Text software

23   Q59 (Hector Minto)

24   RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)

25   Web and Internet Science Group (WAIS) Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Shaw Trust (AST0039), Abilitynet (AST0024), Scope (AST0009), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008), Sense (AST0026), Microsoft (AST0021), Google (AST0038), Apple (AST0037), Name Withheld (AST0047)

26   Q58 (Robin Christopherson)

Case study 2: Stacey

> Stacey is blind. She explained: 'As someone with no useful vision, I exist through my ears when it comes to accessing the content I need. Whether it's replying to work emails, booking calendar appointments, sending a Tweet, finding a route, navigating a spreadsheet or booking the next big show in the West End, I do all of this through text-to-speech software. Having equal access to everything, through speech, alongside my peers, allows me to be fully independent and completely free and able to make my own life choices, in education, work, or at home."

Source: RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)

8.   Mainstream AT can provide a more streamlined service for users than specialist devices, removing the need to use multiple pieces of equipment for different purposes. Instead one piece of tech, using multiple apps—which are often very cheap or free—can be used across functions. This contributes further to reduced costs. Robin Christopherson explained:[27]

> *Being blind, everything needs to talk. Ten or fifteen years ago, I had a backpack full of talking specialist devices: a talking note taker, £1,500; a talking voice recorder, £200; a talking MP3 player, £250; a talking GPS, £750. I could go on and on. Each had their own chargers and operating system and way of working. Nowadays, I do literally all of that on my phone, and I have choices of dozens, if not hundreds, of other apps, some of which are mainstream and some of which are specialist, but all of which are very, very affordable on that phone as well.*

9.   Specialist technology, such as screen reader, magnification, dictation and eye tracking software, is often bolted on to existing workplace IT.[28] We heard there is a substantial risk of these programmes becoming incompatible with the systems they are downloaded onto. Workplace computer systems have regular, often automatic, software updates. Smaller companies designing specialist AT often do not have the capacity to keep up with continually changing software demands.[29] Specialist AT can therefore quickly become outdated. John Welsman, an AT user, explained:[30]

> *Having a 5 to 10-year-old screen reader will work to some degree, but will increasingly fail to work with elements like internet browsers and the design principles adopted in modern [websites]. It will also fail the end user when his or her employer upgrades to new versions of Windows or Microsoft Office, which are the mainstay of most businesses, as up to date screen readers and magnifiers are iteratively updated to cope with changes in interfaces and software technology.*

10.   We heard incompatible AT causes real difficulty for disabled employees. Business Disability Forum, a not-for-profit organisation that helps businesses become more disability-friendly, explained that they had experienced cases where specialist technology recommended by Access to Work could not be installed at all because it was incompatible

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27   Q58 (Robin Christopherson)

28   Aspire (AST0017), Sense (AST0026), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)

29   Business Disability Forum (AST0023), Name Withheld (AST0003), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), John Welsman (AST0013)

30   John Welsman (AST0013)

with business systems.[31] A wide variety of witnesses told us this is a key reason why greater integration of AT in mainstream computer systems and consumer products is preferable to specialist add-ons.[32] Business Disability Forum suggested difficulties with compatibility will persist as long as AT is added to existing computer systems, rather than being integrated with them from the outset.[33]

11.   Mainstream technologies will be an appropriate, cheaper option for many disabled people. We heard, however, that in some instances they are not yet as good as specialist counterparts (see Case study 3). This is especially so where users have severe impairments. For example, Microsoft Windows holds by far the largest market share of computer operating systems in the UK.[34] RNIB, a charity for people with sight loss, told us that built-in screen magnification on Microsoft Windows generally works well enough for people with some useful vision to negate the need for specialist software. They explained, however, that it is not yet advanced enough for people with no useful vision. In this instance, specialist AT software would remain necessary for some users.[35] We heard this is not, however, an inherent problem with mainstream, built-in AT. Other operating systems, such as Apple's, are much more advanced. They offer a realistic alternative for people with very little or no useful vision.[36]

Case study 3: Stephen

Stephen is a wheelchair user and has limited upper body movement. The nature of his impairments means a mixture of specialist and mainstream technologies work best for him. He uses specialist Dragon dictation software on his PC, as well as in-built Siri dictation on his iPad and phone. Combined, these enable him to send emails, write complex documents, access the internet and make phone calls all by using voice control software. Assistive technology enabled him to set up his own business, which turned over £2 million a year. He has also delivered government outsourced contracts, managed a workforce of 800 people and held roles as a Board Director of the Olympic Delivery Authority. In addition, he has been a Non-Executive Director of many enterprises. Technology has been integral to his hugely successful career.

Source: Stephen Duckworth (AST0046)

12.   Despite being more expensive and sometimes less effective, specialist AT remains the most popular option amongst many disabled people.[37] The Government Digital Service's 2016 Assistive Technology Survey found that only a third of screen reader users were using either a built-in or open-source license screen reader. The rest opted for a more expensive, specialist alternative.[38] The most popular option in each category surveyed was

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31   Business Disability Forum (AST0023)
32   Scope (AST0009), Apple (AST0037), Microsoft (AST0021), IBM (AST0031), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Aspire (AST0017), Inclusion London (AST0016), John Welsman (AST0013), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Name Withheld (AST0047)
33   Business Disability Forum (AST0023). See also: Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Action on Hearing loss (AST0025), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)
34   Operating systems market share UK
35   RNIB (AST0044). See also, Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), John Welsman (AST0013), Q18 (Simon Wheatcroft), Name Withheld (AST0047)
36   Q17 (Simon Wheatcroft)
37   WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Abilitynet (AST0024), DWP (AST0032)
38   Moore, C. Results of the 2016 GOV.UK assistive technology survey, November 2016

specialist software.[39] AbilityNet explained this is largely due to a lack of knowledge of mainstream, built-in AT. Users do not know "what [their] existing system is a capable of, which adjustments would be relevant, or which menu to use to make that adjustment".[40] Microsoft's Hector Minto gave a simple example of an employee who had broken their arm—becoming temporarily disabled. They could simply press the shift key on their standard keyboard five times to enable them to type with one hand. He explained, "most people do not know what this option is, yet it has been built into Windows since 1995".[41] The Department agreed that lack of awareness is a key issue. They explained that "many employers and individuals are not aware of the features within devices they already own or could be purchased at a reasonable cost".[42] AbilityNet suggested Government has an important role to play in raising awareness of wholly accessible mainstream AT.[43]

13. **Specialist assistive technology may, for now, remain the best option for some disabled people. But mainstream competitors increasingly provide the same functions at lower cost, with greater flexibility and compatibility with existing systems. We all use assistive technology every day. The potential of assistive technology to help a great many more disabled people work will be missed if it continues to be viewed predominantly as expensive, specialist equipment.**

The future of assistive technology

14. Despite substantial recent advances in AT, there is still a need for improvement. Organisations told us that key gaps in the market for cheap, accessible AT remain. They include, for example, high quality speech-to-text programmes that can accurately transcribe conversations for people with hearing loss, and apps to help people with learning difficulties and disabilities carry out tasks at work.[44] We heard the lack of involvement of disabled people in development of AT contributes to these gaps. Inclusion London explained that disabled people are "experts by experience" in the kinds of AT they need. They told us industry needs to tap into this expertise by involving disabled people in the design of future products and improving existing ones.[45] Others, such as How Do I?, explained that, as Access to Work has a dominant market position as the major purchaser, its decisions can determine which AT innovations will be successful. A focus by Access to Work assessors on outdated AT means these innovations often fail, despite latent demand.[46] Microsoft called for an ambitious approach from Government in which they would seek to entirely "reimagine […] existing technology, workplace

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39   Moore, C. Results of the 2016 GOV.UK assistive technology survey. The survey asked users of screen readers, screen magnifiers, speech recognition software and "reading solutions" what software they used to access the gov.uk website.

40   AbilityNet (AST0024)

41   Q61 (Hector Minto)

42   DWP (AST0032)

43   AbilityNet (AST0024). See also: Scope (AST0009), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Jisc (AST0010)

44   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Ideas for Ears (AST0029), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Scope (AST0009), Inclusion London (AST0016), Business Disability Forum (AST0023), How Do I? (AST0014), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Orcam (AST0018), Wayfindr (AST0007), Microsoft (AST0021)

45   Inclusion London (AST0016), Scope (AST0009),Shaw Trust (AST0039)

46   How do I? (AST0014). See also: All Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology(AST0035), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Jisc (AST0010), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008), Action for ME (AST0006), Name Withheld (AST0003). We discuss Access to Work in detail in Chapter 5.

systems and customer portals".[47] The Department agreed. It told us government believes it should "focus on encouraging innovation, developing the market for assistive technology and awareness raising".[48]

15. Localis, an independent think-tank, called on the government to "create a sector deal for disability as part of the emerging industrial strategy".[49] The Government's November 2017 Industrial Strategy white paper, *Building a Britain Fit for the Future*, did not mention disability or disabled workers.[50] As part of its vision of a State that "intervenes decisively wherever it can make a difference" it did, however, launch a new Challenge Fund. This will run from 2017 to 2021, and allocate £4.7 billion of funding. Wave 1 of funding is underway, with £1 billion allocated. The call for applications to Wave 2 closes in April 2018. Subsequent calls will be issued thereafter.[51] The Government invites individual organisations or industry-led consortiums to apply for funding from the Challenge Fund to develop technologies that address one (or more) or four "Grand Challenges":

> i) Artificial intelligence: developing artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies, both to grow new industries and to transform existing working practices;
>
> ii) Ageing society: including new care technologies, new housing models and innovating saving products that help older people live independent and fulfilling lives;
>
> iii) Mobility: shaping "profound change" in how people, goods and services are delivered in towns, cities and the countryside; and
>
> iv) Clean growth: developing, manufacturing and using low carbon technologies.

16. In its evidence to our inquiry, the Department noted that "disabled people are one group who could benefit from innovation" supported by the Challenge Fund.[52] The Industrial Strategy's local funding mechanisms could also be used to stimulate and support developments in AT.[53] Localis said the Government should seek to support the development of the "industries and businesses growing up around the needs of disabled people".[54] Other organisations we heard from echoed this view. They suggested that given the potential boost to employment for disabled people, DWP had an important part to play identifying priority areas of development.[55] RNIB advised that as well as working

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47   Microsoft (AST0021), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Inclusion London (AST0016), Scope (AST0009), Business Disability Forum (AST0023), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022)

48   DWP (AST0032)

49   Booth Smith, L. Davis, F. A sector deal for disability, July 2017, p.3

50   HM Government, Industrial strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, November 2017

51   HM Government, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/industrial-strategy-challenge-fund-tell-us-what-to-support, February 2018

52   DWP (AST0032)

53   For example, the Strength in Places fund provides £115 million to support regions to develop existing strengths in areas such as Life Sciences and Medical Technology. It aims to enhance collaboration between universities, businesses, local government and, in England, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). HM Government, Industrial strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, p.85

54   Booth Smith, L. Davis, F. A sector deal for disability, p27

55   Inclusion London (AST0016), All Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (AST0035), Action on Hearing loss (AST0025), Business Disability Forum (AST0023), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), RNIB (AST0044), Orcam (AST0018), How Do I? (AST0014), National Association of Deafened People (AST0033)

alongside users of AT—a "hugely untapped resource" of information about the strengths and pitfalls of existing technologies—DWP should also consult with representative charities and support providers, technology firms and employers themselves.[56]

17. **Government has a key role in changing perceptions of assistive technology, not just out of compassion but in the national economic interest. Development of assistive technology is currently stunted by outdated attitudes, not least in Access to Work as the dominant purchaser, and a lack of involvement of disabled people in development. Assistive technology can help everyone be more productive and improve their quality of life. The Government must raise awareness of this fact, bring assistive technology to the mass market and, in turn, drive down costs.**

18. **The Government's role is not simply to raise awareness. Assistive technology is a critical employment resource for individual disabled people. Mainstream assistive technology has a much wider application. Unlocking the full potential of assistive technology could transform our economic outlook, improve workforce efficiency and break the deadlock on the economy enforced by sluggish productivity. In its recent Industrial Strategy, the Government outlined its intention to intervene in markets to build a modern, dynamic economy. Tapping the potential of assistive technology is the epitome of that. In the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund—and the associated regional funds—the Government has a ready means of offering financial incentives to innovate. But this will only happen if it makes concerted efforts to stimulate entrepreneurship and focus on driving forward advances in assistive technology. In missing assistive technology from its Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges, the Government has missed a trick.**

19. *We recommend the Government create a fifth Industrial Strategy Grand Challenge on Assistive Technology and ensures this focus is reflected throughout its regional funding streams. This would cost nothing, but would send a clear signal that the Government recognises the vital role that assistive technology could play in closing the disability employment gap and revitalising the UK economy. It would also allow for funding the development of a broader range of assistive technology than is possible via the current Challenges. Once this Challenge is established the Department has a vital role to play as a convener. It should bring together a consortium of AT developers and entrepreneurs, users, employers and support providers to bid for funding, helping bridge gaps in provision and open up assistive technology to a much wider market.*

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56   RNIB (AST0044). See also: Inclusion London (AST0016), Shaw Trust (AST0039), Hft (AST0030), How Do I? (AST0014), Business Disability Forum (AST0023)

3   The role of employers

20.   Employer attitudes remain one of the biggest barriers for disabled people seeking employment.[57] Research commissioned by Leonard Cheshire Disability found that, of line managers who are less likely to employ a disabled person, almost three in four (73%) would be concerned they would struggle to do the job.[58] Employers may also be concerned about incurring extra costs, either through lost productivity or through funding adaptations.[59] For many, it is simply a step into the unknown. These concerns disadvantage both disabled people looking for work, and employees with health conditions seeking to stay in work. We heard that employers could be relieved of concerns about productivity if they understood more about how cheap or free AT can support disabled employees (see Case Study 4, below).[60]

Case study 4: Anil

> Anil has cerebral palsy. He is looking for a job as a web designer. His condition reduces his ability to type, so he uses the Google speech-to-text app. Anil thinks that speech recognition software could help him manage his workload when he finds a job, but that he would need funding for software that transcribes his speech more accurately. His awareness of what this technology might be, how it works, and how it fits with IT systems is very limited. He does not know what software he could use that would be compatible with the specialist coding software he would be using at work.
>
> If Anil knew what technology he needs he reassure his employers about his capabilities. He could even demonstrate how it works to potential employers at interview. This would help dispel concerns they might have had about his ability to do the job.

Source: Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022)

Changing employer attitudes

21.   We heard that employer awareness and understanding of AT is low.[61] This means employers often do not realise disabled employees' potential. Ultimately, this damages productivity. AbilityNet's Robin Christopherson told us that, with the right AT and adjustments, "disabled employees are as productive as their able-bodied colleagues, take less sick leave and stay longer in their jobs".[62] However, disabled people told Shaw Trust that lack of understanding by employers made it "difficult" for them to explain how AT would assist them at work, and to put forward a business case for any investment needed.[63] The Department told us that many employers are not aware of the features within devices they (or disabled employees) already own or which could be purchased at a reasonable

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57   Work and Pensions Committee, Disability employment gap, p.31

58   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022). See also: How Do I? (AST0014), Milton Keynes Council (AST0011), Action for ME (AST0006)

59   Sense (DEG0065), Breakthrough UK (DEG0053), Papworth Trust (DEG0043), Blind in Business (DEG0017), Sight for Surrey (DEG0080), How Do I? (AST0014)

60   RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Shaw Trust (AST0039)

61   Action for ME (AST0006), Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), AbilityNet (AST0024), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), How Do I? (AST0014)

62   Q62 (Robin Christopherson)

63   Shaw Trust (AST0027)

cost.[64] The Department offers few resources to raise awareness and educate employers, however. Its employer service, Fit for Work, provides advice to employers on how to support employees with health conditions. It makes limited reference to AT.[65] Disability Confident, DWP's scheme for encouraging employers to hire and retain disabled people, similarly makes no specific provision for encouraging employers to build their awareness and understanding of AT.[66]

22. The Department suggested, however, that it might use its planned Disability Confident information portal to offer employers AT support.[67] The portal aims to enhance access to support on disability for employers of all sizes.[68] The Department said it is currently exploring what information would be of the greatest benefit to employers.[69] Witnesses told us the Department should prioritise improving employer understanding of AT and how to access it.[70] This could include:

a) Information about the different types of AT available and how these can support people with different health conditions at work.[71] This could include reminders of Equality Act obligations and case studies of how AT can help meet these.[72]

b) Promotion of mainstream, cost-effective AT and AT support. The portal could, for example, signpost mainstream provider helplines such as Microsoft's accessibility helpdesk, AbilityNet's My Computer My Way website or the Disabled Living Foundation's Living Made Easy website.[73]

c) Guidance on making existing IT systems compatible with AT, ways of ensuring continuing compatibility after updates, and procuring accessible systems.[74]

d) Advice on discussing the different kinds of AT available with a disabled employee and what funding assistance is available.[75]

e) Guidance on making recruitment processes accessible to users of AT, for example by providing application forms in Microsoft Word format.[76]

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64   DWP (AST0032)
65   DWP, Fit for Work, March 2018
66   DWP, Disability Confident employment scheme and guidance, November 2016
67   DWP (AST0032)
68   DWP, Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability, p.26
69   DWP (AST0032)
70   Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Scope (AST0009)
71   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), See also: Shaw Trust (AST0027), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)
72   Shaw Trust (AST0027). See also: AbilityNet (AST0024), Aspire (AST0017), All Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (AST0035), British Assistive Technology (AST0034), National Association of Deafened People (AST0033)
73   Scope (AST0009). See also: AbilityNet (AST0024), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Jisc (AST0010)
74   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022). See also: Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Microsoft (AST0021), Inclusion London (AST0016), Scope (AST0009), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019)
75   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022)
76   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022). See also: Inclusion London (AST0016), Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Abilitynet (AST0024), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), How Do I? (AST0014)

23. Shaw Trust told us that the launch of the portal should be accompanied by an awareness campaign.[77] The Business Disability Forum (BDF) stressed the campaign should focus on the wider business benefits, rather than presenting AT as "adjustments for disabled people". BDF's disabled members felt that seeing AT as "mainstreamed" and "normalised" in everyday working life would be invaluable in changing employer attitudes.[78] This approach could also benefit the wider workforce. Adjustments that can be used as AT can help non-disabled employees be more productive, too. Screen-reading software can help anyone to proof read documents, for example.[79] BDF explained that at the University of Kent, all IT users are pointed towards a suite of "Productivity Tools" that help them find what works for them and their way of working.[80]

24. **Assistive technology is not just good for individual disabled people: it is good for business. It can play a huge role in dispelling employer concerns about hiring or retaining disabled workers, opening a much wider pool of talent. It could also enhance productivity for disabled and non-disabled employees alike. Realising this potential depends on employers knowing about assistive technology, and disabled people using it to its full potential. The Department must not miss the chance to make AT a central component of its work with employers through Disability Confident.** *We recommend the Department dedicate a section of its Disability Confident portal to assistive technology. This should include information on types of assistive technology; case studies of how they can help; promotion of mainstream, low-cost assistive technology; and signposting towards resources for helping individuals and building compatible systems. The Department should run a publicity campaign alongside the launch of the portal, highlighting the business benefits of assistive technology at work.*

The civil service as a Disability Confident leader

25. Employers registered with Disability Confident can progress through three accreditation levels: "Committed", "Employer" and "Leader".[81] The government aims to lead by example on disability employment through the civil service. In the *Improving Lives* response, it announced that all main government departments are now Disability Confident leaders.[82] We heard, however, that IT systems in the civil service can be particularly inaccessible to many disabled employees. Notably, IT was not standardised across Departments, which is a particular problem because many civil servants move roles every two or three years. They may find their AT works in one Department, but not in another.[83] As well as causing immediate practical difficulties, this can hinder disabled peoples' career progression. Jo-Ann Moran, a civil servant in the Home Office, told us:[84]

> *I am a top performer in my grade and I keep getting told, "Come on, go for it," but I cannot because without [consistent IT/AT] I am just not going to be reliable. If, say, I go for a job working for a Minister, a Minister is not going to accommodate me when I say, "Sorry, my computer is not working today". That is where my barrier is at.*

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77 Shaw Trust (AST0027). See also: RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Business Disability Forum (AST0023)

78 Business Disability Forum (AST0023)

79 Q58 (Hector Minto)

80 Business Disability Forum (AST0023). See also: Jisc (AST0010), Q58 (Robin Christopherson), Q58 (Hector Minto)

81 DWP, Disability Confident Level 1 (Committed); Disability Confident Level 2 (Employer); Disability Confident Level 3 (Leader), March 2018

82 DWP, Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability, p.29

83 Business Disability Forum (AST0023), Cabinet Office (AST0036), Q53 (Jo-Ann Moran), Q37 Tracey Johnson

84 Q53 (Jo-Ann Moran)

26. Shaw Trust told us that ensuring technological accessibility should be clearly built into Disability Confident at all levels.[85] Microsoft's Hector Minto argued that "you cannot claim to be Disability Confident both in terms of accessing your customers with disabilities or employing people with disabilities if you do not have some basic technological experience".[86] Witnesses recommended that several Disability Confident qualifying criteria should be updated to include specific requirements on and reference to AT. For example:

  i)   Committed: RNIB and Inclusion London recommended employers should be required to ensure recruitment process are inclusive and accessible to AT users.[87]

  ii)   Employer: Shaw Trust said employers should demonstrate flexibility when assessing people, for example through offering a video relay service for interviews, or considering offering AT to disabled applicants to help them complete tests and exercises.[88] Employers could also be asked to provide examples of good practice in the use of AT as evidence of "supporting employees to manage their disability or health conditions".[89]

  iii) Leader: Shaw Trust advocated a requirement for IT procurement policies that ensure AT users are able to operate systems at the same level of functionality as non-users.[90]

27. Microsoft and Shaw Trust argued that civil service leadership of AT should encompass ensuring that new systems provided full accessibility for AT users, without specialist "add-ons".[91] This would begin to address the problems of AT compatibility between civil service departments. Microsoft explained of this approach also had much wider benefits:

> *When government purchases technology that is inclusive, it lowers the demands on specialist solutions and is more usable for all.*[92]

28. **The Government wants the civil service to be a model Disability Confident workplace. But a lack of attention to assistive technology in procurement and poor coordination between departments risks undermining this goal. Government should show leadership in demonstrating how assistive technology can help disabled employees work, and progress their careers, in much the same way as their non-disabled colleagues.** *We recommend the Department introduce specific criteria on assistive technology to Disability Confident. As part of this, employers at Leader level should procure accessible systems. The Government should commit to doing this for all new IT procurement from April 2019. To drive improvement, the Department should*

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85   Shaw Trust (AST0027), Shaw Trust (AST0039). See also: Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Microsoft (AST0021), Inclusion London (AST0016), Scope (AST0009), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019)

86   Q62 (Hector Minto)

87   Inclusion London (AST0016), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)

88   Sense (AST0026), Shaw Trust (AST0027)

89   Shaw Trust (AST0027)

90   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Microsoft (AST0021), Inclusion London (AST0016), Scope (AST0009), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019)

91   Microsoft (AST0021), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Shaw Trust (AST0039). See also: Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Inclusion London (AST0016), Scope (AST0009), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019)

92   Microsoft (AST0021)

create a central standard for accessible systems in government departments. It should then produce and publish an annual report on compliance via Disability Confident, ranking departments from most to least accessible.

4   Pre-employment support

29.   It is not just employers who lack awareness about the potential of AT. Leonard Cheshire Disability told us the employment prospects of many disabled people are hindered because they do not know how AT can enhance their own capacity to work.[93] In turn, this can cause them to miss many opportunities. For example, most recruitment processes now take place online, but AT is often necessary for disabled people to use the internet.[94] In 2017, the Office for National Statistics found that 22% of disabled adults have never used the internet compared with 9% of non-disabled people.[95] Lack of training and the cost of equipment are key reasons for low take up.[96] Scope explained that not having internet access means disabled people are immediately cut off from large parts of the labour market.[97] Beyond simply accessing opportunities, AT can also help disabled people gain a broader understanding of the sorts of work they could do, learn skills, and provide a means of demonstrating their ability to perform certain roles.[98]

Learning the skills for work

30.   In the next chapter, we consider Access to Work, the DWP's programme to fund adjustments for employees whose health conditions affect the way they do their job.[99] Access to Work offers a valued service, but is only available for people who are already in work. We heard that prior to an Access to Work assessment, many potential users of AT have no idea what kinds of AT could support them.[100] Prior knowledge of suitable AT could be beneficial on starting work, not least because employer awareness can be low.[101] There can also be long waits for equipment to arrive and be set up, followed by time taken to learn how to use it effectively.[102] Combined, this can mean it takes weeks or months before disabled workers are able to work as productively as non-disabled workers—a factor that may act as a further disincentive to employers and deter some disabled people from applying for certain jobs. Jo Ann Moran, a civil servant, told us that all of this made starting a new job even more "nerve-wracking" than it would otherwise be.[103]

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93   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022). See also: Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Jisc (AST0010), Scope(AST0009), RNIB (AST0044), British Assistive Technology (AST0034)

94   AbilityNet (AST0024), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Inclusion London (AST0016), How Do I? (AST0014), Scope (AST0009)

95   Office for National Statistics, Internet users in the UK: 2017, May 2017

96   Extra Costs Commission, Driving down the extra costs disabled people face, 2015

97   Scope (AST0009). See also: WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Shaw Trust (AST0027)

98   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022). See also: Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Jisc (AST0010), Scope (AST0009), RNIB (AST0044), British Assistive Technology (AST0034), Inclusion London (AST0016), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)

99   The process of Access to Work assessments is explained in Chapter 5

100   Q38 (Tracey Johnson), Q22 (Simon Wheatcroft)

101   Action for ME (AST0006), See also: Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), AbilityNet (AST0024), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), How Do I? (AST0014)

102   Name Withheld (AST0003),Shaw Trust (AST0027), Name Withheld (AST0047), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Inclusion London (AST0016), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025)

103   Q19 (Jo-Ann Moran)

31.   There are few mechanisms for unemployed disabled people to find out about AT, and learn how to use it in preparation for employment.[104] Users can seek independent advice from specific charities and support organisations, but this provision is limited. Aspire, a charity supporting people with spinal cord injury, described it "notoriously inconsistent across the country".[105] Some witnesses suggested this kind of advice could be provided initially by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches—front-line support staff.[106] Jobcentre Plus might additionally ensure AT is available on-site for disabled job-seekers to use while looking for work, with staff on hand to offer help if necessary.[107]

32.   Action on Hearing Loss told us there was a "strong case" for providing disabled jobseekers with more detailed, expert pre-work AT consultations with charities and user organisations.[108] These could include a preliminary assessment of what AT might be useful, referrals for pre-work training, and advice on built-in accessibility options built into devices they already own.[109] This provision could be made for any claimants with impairment, whether they are on Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseekers' Allowance or Universal Credit.[110] For some claimants, this might negate the need for an Access to Work assessment altogether, saving time and public money. For others, it could make the process of carrying out an Access to Work assessment and learning to use the equipment much quicker.

33.   The Department's Flexible Support Fund (FSF) can be used to fund employment support to which individuals are referred at the discretion of Work Coaches.[111] The Department explained that AT and related training could be funded through FSF "barrier awards", which aim to remove obstacles to searches for work.[112] These might include "awards for the purchase of specialist equipment, such as assistive digital packages where appropriate". In practice, the FSF is rarely used to fund AT equipment or training. The Department told us that clothing, tools and travel costs account for the majority of awards.[113] The FSF budget was reduced from £179 million in 2014–15 to £52 million in 2016–17. This partly reflects its historic tendency to be underspent—barely half of the 2014–15 budget was used. The FSF budget is reviewed each year to reflect "claimant needs and volumes".[114]

34.   Shaw Trust explained that whether the FSF is used to fund AT support hinges on Work Coaches having a "basic level of understanding of AT and its benefits", sufficient to prompt them to make referrals.[115] Currently, Work Coaches do not receive specific training on AT. Specialist DWP Disability Employment Advisers have some training on

104   Q38 (Tracey Johnson), Q22 (Simon Wheatcroft), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022).See also: Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Jisc (AST0010), Scope (AST0009), RNIB (AST0044), British Assistive Technology (AST0034)

105   Aspire (AST0017), Inclusion London (AST0016), Association of Disabled Professionals(AST0015), Jisc (AST0010), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008), Name Withheld (AST0047)

106   Sense (AST0026), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Shaw Trust (AST0039)

107   RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020)

108   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Jisc (AST0010), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008), Shaw Trust (AST0027), Shaw Trust (AST0039)

109   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025)

110   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Shaw Trust (AST0039)

111   DWP (AST0032)

112   Letter from Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to Chair of the Committee, February 2018

113   Letter from Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to Chair of the Committee, February 2018

114   WQ131067

115   Shaw Trust (AST0039)

assistive equipment and are responsible for passing this training on to Work Coaches.[116] Shaw Trust suggested JCP needs to do more to ensure front-line Work Coaches themselves receive training on AT, equipping them with the knowledge needed to refer claimants.[117] We also heard that referrals are dependent on up-to-date, specialist support being available across JCP areas.[118] Witnesses told us provision of these services could be stimulated by the Department encouraging local specialist services to tender for FSF funding.[119]

35.   **Opportunities for disabled people to understand the potential benefits of assistive technology while looking for work are limited. This can make it harder for them to convince employers they can do a job. It may even discourage them from seeking a job at all. The support currently available through Jobcentre Plus is limited and patchy. But provision already exists—via the Flexible Support Fund—to greatly enhance access to assistive technology for out of work disabled people.** *We recommend the Department update training for front line Work Coaches to include mandatory training on assistive technology. This should include emphasising the wide range of conditions that AT can help manage, and encouraging Work Coaches to make referrals at the earliest point of contact. We further recommend the Department undertakes an assessment of existing and potential suppliers of assistive technology support to inform development of a more consistent, extensive market linked to the Flexible Support Fund. The support that is available should be publicised, on a rolling basis, to Jobcentre Plus staff and claimants.*

Buying assistive technology

36.   Financial barriers can prevent disabled people from making use of AT. Disabled people often face greater and unavoidable financial pressures on their incomes than non-disabled people.[120] Witnesses explained that support to buy AT outside the workplace is limited. We heard that few charities offer finance for AT and, occasional grants via the FSF aside, there is no substantial source of public funding.[121] People requiring expensive, specialist AT packages may particularly struggle to afford them. For disabled people relying on out-of-work benefits or on low incomes, even mainstream accessible technologies like a smartphone or basic laptop may be out of reach.[122]

37.   Some witnesses suggested funding for AT could be provided through the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit.[123] PIP is intended to help cover some of the extra costs associated with having a health condition, and to enable disabled people to participate in society.[124] The Department told us that AT can be a tool for reaching similar goals, enabling "greater inclusion of disabled people in the workplace and broader society".[125]

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116   Letter from Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to Chair of the Committee, February 2018
117   Shaw Trust (AST0039)
118   Shaw Trust (AST0039), RNIB (AST0044)
119   Shaw Trust (AST0039), All Party Parliamentary Group on Assistive Technology (AST0035), Business Disability Forum (AST0035), Hft (AST0030)
120   MRC/CSO Public and Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow (DEG0073)
121   Shaw Trust (AST0027), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Stephen Duckworth (AST0041), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Name Withheld (AST0047), Scope (AST0009)
122   Shaw Trust (AST0027), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Stephen Duckworth (AST0041), RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (AST0020), Q21 (Simon Wheatcroft), Q27 (Stephen Duckworth), Name Withheld (AST0047)
123   Stephen Duckworth (AST0041), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Shaw Trust (AST0027)
124   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/pip, March 2018
125   DWP (AST0032)

38. PIP is split into two components—mobility and daily living.[126] Claimants who receive the mobility award can opt to use it to lease high-cost items such cars, scooters or electric wheelchairs at a preferential rate via the Motability scheme, in lieu of a monthly payment. There is no equivalent for the daily living component.[127] Stephen Duckworth, an AT user and business leader, told us the Government should introduce one. He envisaged a "financing stream that could provide money upfront that could then be deducted off people's monthly income from PIP".[128] Leonard Cheshire Disability endorsed a similar funding model. They explained an ideal scheme would include:[129]

i)   a comprehensive assessment of an individual's specific needs, carried out by someone with specialist knowledge of their condition;

ii)   recommendations of the right technology, which they could opt to buy or lease through a loan, repayable through PIP awards; and

iii) support during the set-up and training process, and with ongoing maintenance of equipment.

Stephen Duckworth told us that this funding system would enable disabled people to "invest in their future", buying AT they would otherwise struggle to afford. This could improve their standard of living and help them both in work and looking for work. As the scheme would act as a low interest loan, it would come at no extra cost to the taxpayer.[130]

39. **Cost barriers prevent disabled people realising the life-changing potential of assistive technology. Specialist AT can cost thousands of pounds. For disabled people with low incomes, even cheaper mainstream AT can be unaffordable. That PIP enables claimants to get access to cars up front, but not smartphones or laptops, is out of step with modern life and work.** *We recommend the Department introduce a new finance scheme for the daily living component of PIP. Claimants should have the option of a low interest loan to buy or lease assistive technology products. Users of the scheme should be offered a consultation before buying equipment, with expert assistive technology advisers, to ensure they are buying the most appropriate and cost-effective equipment. The Department need not administer the scheme, but should ensure that whoever company does so works in line with the principles of providing a public service.*

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126   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/pip/what-youll-get , March 2018
127   Motability, https://www.motability.co.uk/ , March 2018
128   Q27 (Stephen Duckworth)
129   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022)
130   Q27 (Stephen Duckworth)

5   Access to Work

40.   Employers are required to make "reasonable adjustments" for disabled employees under the Equality Act 2010.[131] Access to Work funds support for beyond those basic requirements. This can include expensive AT, travel costs, interpretation or a support worker.[132] 53% of Access to Work grants include some form of AT or equipment.[133] The process begins once the employee is in work, or has a start date. They undergo an assessment with an Access to Work-trained assessor, who then drafts a report outlining the specific adjustments that the employee requires. A Decision Maker in DWP then costs any recommendations and decides whether the support should be funded by the scheme, or by the employer.[134]

The Access to Work cap

41.   Assistive technology helps overcome many workplace barriers for disabled people, and has the potential to do much more. It still has its limitations, however. One of these is communication support for D/deaf people. Organisations explained that there is no real technological substitute for British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation support for D/deaf people in some types of employment.[135] AT such as remote interpreting can be effective for brief phone calls or short one-to-one conversations. But it is not a practical nor cost effective alternative for people in jobs that require regular, unstructured interaction with colleagues or clients. This means that dedicated one-to-one communication support remains necessary for many D/deaf people to do their jobs.[136] Jane Cordell, a deaf business owner and former senior civil servant who has given evidence to us on several occasions, told us this is particularly so for D/deaf and disabled people in senior professional roles, who often act as aspirational role models for other disabled people.[137]

42.   Alongside one-off payments for AT, Access to Work can fund ongoing payments for support workers and BSL interpreters. The latter is the single largest category of Access to Work expenditure.[138] In 2014 DWP began to systematically apply a discretionary limit on Access to Work for BSL interpreters at £35,000 per year.[139] In response to complaints by D/deaf and disabled people increased cap of £40,800 was introduced for new users in October 2015. It was due to apply to existing users—set at £42,100—from April 2018.[140] Affected D/deaf people and organisations told us the revised cap was still too low; the market rate for full time BSL interpreters is £60,000 per year. Deaf people commenting

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131   Equality Act 2010

132   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work, March 2018

133   DWP, Equality Analysis for the future of Access to Work, May 2015

134   DWP, https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work, March 2018

135   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Jane Cordell (AST0040), National Association of Deafened People (AST0033), Deaf ATW (AST0012), Graeae Theatre Company Ltd (ATW0009), DeafATW (ATW0003)

136   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Deaf ATW (AST0012), DeafATW (ATW0003)

137   Jane Cordell (AST0040), Deaf ATW (ATW0003), Inclusion London (ATW0002), British Deaf Association (ATW0005)

138   DWP, Equality Analysis for the future of Access to Work, May 2015

139   Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, A report of investigations into complaints about Access to Work, October 2017

140   The Parliamentary and Heath Service Ombudsman published a report into complaints received about Access to Work between 2014–2016. This highlights the effect of the initial cap on Access to Work customers. The £40,800 figure is set in line with 1.5 times national average earnings.

to the inquiry told us the cap makes it impossible to access communication support full time. This limited their employment prospects, making it harder, to get into, stay in, and progress in employment. It also risked acting as a "cap on aspiration", fuelling a perception that people with complex communication needs cannot be accommodated in work—especially in highly paid, senior roles.[141]

43.   In March 2018 the Department announced that the cap would be lifted to £57,200 per year from April 2018, for both new and existing users—an increase of £15,000. This brings the cap much more in line with the market rate for BSL interpreters. The Department said this would ensure that more disabled people, particularly those who are d/Deaf, would be able to benefit from support and improve their employment prospects. The UK Council on Deafness (UKCoD)—an umbrella group for organisations supporting people with hearing loss—welcomed the announcement. Action on Hearing Loss, one of UKCoD's members, agreed with the Department that the new cap meant many more people would be able to "thrive and succeed" at work.[142]

44.   **Lifting the Access to Work cap sends a clear message that the Department is willing to listen to evidence. We welcome this decision.**

A broader definition of assistive technology

45.   The Department told us assessors have regular team meetings and external training to ensure they have up-to-date knowledge of the latest AT.[143] They are encouraged to recommend cost-effective solutions and have access to a supply chain list which includes mainstream and low-cost technologies.[144] Access to Work cannot fund "standard" equipment—equipment anyone doing a particular job would require, irrespective of disability. Assessors are under no obligation, however, to recommend specialist equipment if there is an appropriate free or built-in alternative.[145] Action on Hearing Loss told us, however, that assessors are "not usually well informed of the latest products". Even when they are, "they may not understand how best they can be utilised in the workplace".[146] AT users agreed that assessors sometimes appeared to lack up-to-date knowledge of AT.[147] One user suggested their assessor seemed wedded to certain specialist suppliers, perhaps based on previous working relationships.[148] Access to Work users said assessors seemed to favour specialist AT, even where mainstream built-in or app-based technologies may have been more or equally effective.[149] Microsoft's Hector Minto explained the consequences of Access to Work assessors not being aware of developments in AT:

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141   Marisa Cohen (ATW0010), Graeae Theatre Company Ltd (AWT0009), Business Disability Forum (ATW0008), Action on Disability (ATW0007), StopChanges2AtW and Branch Secretary of NUBSLI (ATW0006), British Deaf Association (ATW0005), Sam Calder Bray (ATW0004), Deaf ATW (ATW0003), Inclusion London (ATW0002), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043), Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025), Jane Cordell (AST0040), National Association of Deafened People (AST0033), Deaf ATW (AST0012)

142   Action on Hearing Loss, Statement on DWP's Access to Work cap increase, 20 March 2018

143   Letter from Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to Chair of the Committee, 20 February 2018

144   Letter from Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to Chair of the Committee, 20 February 2018

145   DWP, Access to Work: staff guide, p.75

146   Action on Hearing loss (AST0043). See also: Scope (AST0009), All Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology(AST0035), Name Withheld (AST0042), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), John Welsman (AST0013), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008)

147   Inclusion London (AST0016), John Welsman (AST0013), Name Withheld (AST0042), Business Disability Forum (AST0035), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Name Withheld (AST0047)

148   John Welsman (AST0013), Name Withheld (AST0047)

149   Name Withheld (AST0003), John Welsman (AST0013), Name Withheld (AST0042), Name Withheld (AST0047)

> *If [assessors] are not using the latest technology and understanding the latest benefits of inclusive design, then they simply cannot understand what the options are in a modern workplace. They need to make sure that they are running the latest versions, and that they are utilising the resources that are available for them from all of the technology companies.*

46. A reliance on specialist technologies also comes with cost implications.[150] For example, specialist magnification software and training to use it can range from a few hundred to several thousand pounds. Encouraging people with residual vision to use free, built in software could release substantial funding in the Access to Work budget.[151]

47. Leonard Cheshire Disability told us mainstream technology should not be a substitute for specialist technologies where a clear need for the latter exists.[152] Assessors should be encouraged to think innovatively, however, about the AT options available. We heard that the Department could encourage this shift by introducing a quality standard for Access to Work assessors.[153] Scope explained that this should follow the same model used for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) assessors, who must meet qualification requirements and maintain their expertise through continual professional development.[154]

48. Access to Work provides training as well as equipment. The availability of tailored training in using equipment may influence assessors' AT recommendations. Specialist suppliers usually include a block of one-to-one training in their Access to Work offer.[155] Mainstream suppliers tend not to offer training, though companies such as Microsoft and Google have dedicated AT helplines. We heard that Access to Work assessors and users were rarely using these facilities.[156] Jisc, a non-profit organisation working on skills and new technologies, said that assessors should be open to consider different training models. They explained that the "block of training" approach can be "overwhelming" for new users. They further highlighted the benefits of continuous "post-assessment training, support and review" to ensure disabled people make the most of their AT.[157] Aspire, a charity, recommended this broader AT training should be "delivered by specialist organisations across the country".[158] Such an approach would lower training costs by removing the link to equipment providers. In turn, this would drive a more competitive, open market place, making the best use of Access to Work's substantial purchasing power.

49. **Access to Work assessors should be at the cutting edge of assistive technology. This is not always the reality. Some assessors are wedded to a traditional understanding of assistive technology, tending towards specialist over mainstream options. The latter can be cheaper and just as good—especially in maintaining compatibility with existing workplace systems. The Department needs to drive cultural change amongst assessors,**

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150   DWP, Equality Analysis for the future of Access to Work, May 2015

151   RNIB (AST0044), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), John Wellsman (AST0013), Q18 (Simon Wheatcroft)

152   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), RNIB (AST0044)

153   Scope (AST0009), Shaw Trust (AST0039), Shaw Trust (AST0027), All Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (AST0035), Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research at the University of Birmingham (AST0008), Action for ME (AST0006)

154   Scope (AST0009)

155   Jisc (AST0010), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008), Name Withheld (AST0047)

156   Q63 (Hector Minto), WAIS Accessibility Team University of Southampton (AST0019), Name Withheld (AST0047)

157   Jisc (AST0010). See also: Association of Disabled Professionals (AST0015), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research University of Birmingham (AST0008)

158   Aspire (AST0017), Q63 (Hector Minto)

ensuring that the benefits of mainstream AT are fully recognised and understood. *We recommend the Department review and update training for Access to Work assessors to emphasise that mainstream AT is, in many cases, at least as appropriate as specialist provision. To ensure assessors' knowledge remains up-to-date, the Department should also introduce a framework of regular quality assessment for assessors.*

50.   **Access to Work offers the first opportunity for many disabled people to use assistive technology. Access to Work funded training, however, is often one off, inflexible, and linked to particular specialist equipment. A more diverse training catalogue, including on mainstream options, would encourage assessors to recommend a wider range of technologies. This would result in better use of assistive technology and better value to the public purse.** *We recommend the Department introduce an "Access to Work (training)" stream within Access to Work. This should provide specialist-led training on using AT, including mainstream, built-in and app-based technologies. It should not be linked to receiving particular equipment, but should be available as a free-standing component of an award, including for equipment the user already owns.*

51.   **The Department must make certain that Access to Work consistently recommends the most effective support for every individual—including pioneering innovations in assistive technology. Alongside this, it should work hard to ensure employers and disabled people themselves are fully aware and able to benefit from all that assistive technology has to offer. With these steps, it could deliver real progress in closing the disability employment gap and resolving the UK's productivity challenge.**

Conclusions and recommendations

Specialist vs mainstream assistive technology

1. Specialist assistive technology may, for now, remain the best option for some disabled people. But mainstream competitors increasingly provide the same functions at lower cost, with greater flexibility and compatibility with existing systems. We all use assistive technology every day. The potential of assistive technology to help a great many more disabled people work will be missed if it continues to be viewed predominantly as expensive, specialist equipment. (Paragraph 13)

2. Government has a key role in changing perceptions of assistive technology, not just out of compassion but in the national economic interest. Development of assistive technology is currently stunted by outdated attitudes, not least in Access to Work as the dominant purchaser, and a lack of involvement of disabled people in development. Assistive technology can help everyone be more productive and improve their quality of life. The Government must raise awareness of this fact, bring assistive technology to the mass market and, in turn, drive down costs. (Paragraph 17)

3. The Government's role is not simply to raise awareness. Assistive technology is a critical employment resource for individual disabled people. Mainstream assistive technology has a much wider application. Unlocking the full potential of assistive technology could transform our economic outlook, improve workforce efficiency and break the deadlock on the economy enforced by sluggish productivity. In its recent Industrial Strategy, the Government outlined its intention to intervene in markets to build a modern, dynamic economy. Tapping the potential of assistive technology is the epitome of that. In the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund—and the associated regional funds—the Government has a ready means of offering financial incentives to innovate. But this will only happen if it makes concerted efforts to stimulate entrepreneurship and focus on driving forward advances in assistive technology. In missing assistive technology from its Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges, the Government has missed a trick. (Paragraph 18)

4. *We recommend the Government create a fifth Industrial Strategy Grand Challenge on Assistive Technology and ensures this focus is reflected throughout its regional funding streams. This would cost nothing, but would send a clear signal that the Government recognises the vital role that assistive technology could play in closing the disability employment gap and revitalising the UK economy. It would also allow for funding the development of a broader range of assistive technology than is possible via the current Challenges. Once this Challenge is established the Department has a vital role to play as a convener. It should bring together a consortium of AT developers and entrepreneurs, users, employers and support providers to bid for funding, helping bridge gaps in provision and open up assistive technology to a much wider market.* (Paragraph 19)

The role of employers

5.   Assistive technology is not just good for individual disabled people: it is good for business. It can play a huge role in dispelling employer concerns about hiring or retaining disabled workers, opening a much wider pool of talent. It could also enhance productivity for disabled and non-disabled employees alike. Realising this potential depends on employers knowing about assistive technology, and disabled people using it to its full potential. The Department must not miss the chance to make AT a central component of its work with employers through Disability Confident. *We recommend the Department dedicate a section of its Disability Confident portal to assistive technology. This should include information on types of assistive technology; case studies of how they can help; promotion of mainstream, low-cost assistive technology; and signposting towards resources for helping individuals and building compatible systems. The Department should run a publicity campaign alongside the launch of the portal, highlighting the business benefits of assistive technology at work.* (Paragraph 24)

6.   The Government wants the civil service to be a model Disability Confident workplace. But a lack of attention to assistive technology in procurement and poor coordination between departments risks undermining this goal. Government should show leadership in demonstrating how assistive technology can help disabled employees work, and progress their careers, in much the same way as their non-disabled colleagues. *We recommend the Department introduce specific criteria on assistive technology to Disability Confident. As part of this, employers at Leader level should procure accessible systems. The Government should commit to doing this for all new IT procurement from April 2019. To drive improvement, the Department should create a central standard for accessible systems in government departments. It should then produce and publish an annual report on compliance via Disability Confident, ranking departments from most to least accessible.* (Paragraph 28)

Pre-employment support

7.   Opportunities for disabled people to understand the potential benefits of assistive technology while looking for work are limited. This can make it harder for them to convince employers they can do a job. It may even discourage them from seeking a job at all. The support currently available through Jobcentre Plus is limited and patchy. But provision already exists—via the Flexible Support Fund—to greatly enhance access to assistive technology for out of work disabled people. *We recommend the Department update training for front line Work Coaches to include mandatory training on assistive technology. This should include emphasising the wide range of conditions that AT can help manage, and encouraging Work Coaches to make referrals at the earliest point of contact. We further recommend the Department undertakes an assessment of existing and potential suppliers of assistive technology support to inform development of a more consistent, extensive market linked to the Flexible Support Fund. The support that is available should be publicised, on a rolling basis, to Jobcentre Plus staff and claimants.* (Paragraph 35)

8. Cost barriers prevent disabled people realising the life-changing potential of assistive technology. Specialist AT can cost thousands of pounds. For disabled people with low incomes, even cheaper mainstream AT can be unaffordable. That PIP enables claimants to get access to cars up front, but not smartphones or laptops, is out of step with modern life and work. *We recommend the Department introduce a new finance scheme for the daily living component of PIP. Claimants should have the option of a low interest loan to buy or lease assistive technology products. Users of the scheme should be offered a consultation before buying equipment, with expert assistive technology advisers, to ensure they are buying the most appropriate and cost-effective equipment. The Department need not administer the scheme, but should ensure that whoever company does so works in line with the principles of providing a public service.* (Paragraph 39)

Access to work

9. Lifting the Access to Work cap sends a clear message that the Department is willing to listen to evidence. We welcome this decision. (Paragraph 44)

10. Access to Work assessors should be at the cutting edge of assistive technology. This is not always the reality. Some assessors are wedded to a traditional understanding of assistive technology, tending towards specialist over mainstream options. The latter can be cheaper and just as good—especially in maintaining compatibility with existing workplace systems. The Department needs to drive cultural change amongst assessors, ensuring that the benefits of mainstream AT are fully recognised and understood. *We recommend the Department review and update training for Access to Work assessors to emphasise that mainstream AT is, in many cases, at least as appropriate as specialist provision. To ensure assessors' knowledge remains up-to-date, the Department should also introduce a framework of regular quality assessment for assessors.* (Paragraph 49)

11. Access to Work offers the first opportunity for many disabled people to use assistive technology. Access to Work funded training, however, is often one off, inflexible, and linked to particular specialist equipment. A more diverse training catalogue, including on mainstream options, would encourage assessors to recommend a wider range of technologies. This would result in better use of assistive technology and better value to the public purse. *We recommend the Department introduce an "Access to Work (training)" stream within Access to Work. This should provide specialist-led training on using AT, including mainstream, built-in and app-based technologies. It should not be linked to receiving particular equipment, but should be available as a free-standing component of an award, including for equipment the user already owns.* (Paragraph 50)

12. The Department must make certain that Access to Work consistently recommends the most effective support for every individual—including pioneering innovations in assistive technology. Alongside this, it should work hard to ensure employers and disabled people themselves are fully aware and able to benefit from all that assistive technology has to offer. With these steps, it could deliver real progress in closing the disability employment gap and resolving the UK's productivity challenge. (Paragraph 51)

Formal minutes

Members present:

Rt Hon Frank Field, in the Chair

Jack Brereton	Steve McCabe
Alex Burghart	Chris Stephens
Ruth George	

Draft report (*Assistive technology*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 51 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Tenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 18 April at 9:15

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 31 January 2018   *Question number*

Jo-Ann Moran, Civil Servant, user of assistive technology, **Stephen Duckworth**, assistive technology user and business leader, **Simon Wheatcroft**, assistive technology software adviser, innovator and user, and **Tracey Johnson**, Holistic Workplace Needs Assessor and Assistive Technology trainer for FM Hearing Systems. Former Access to Work assessor   Q1–55

Hector Minto, Senior Technology Evangelist (accessibility), Microsoft and **Robin Christopherson MBE**, Head of Digital Inclusion, AbilityNet   Q56–69

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

AST numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1   AbilityNet (AST0024)

2   Action for M.E. (AST0006)

3   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0025)

4   Action on Hearing Loss (AST0043)

5   All-Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (AST0035)

6   Apple (AST0037)

7   Aria Tech Corp (AST0002)

8   Aspire (AST0017)

9   Association of Disabled Professionals (AST0015)

10   British Assistive Technology Association (AST0034)

11   Business Disability Forum (AST0023)

12   Cabinet Office (AST0036)

13   DeafATW (AST0012)

14   Department for Work and Pensions (AST0032)

15   Department for Work and Pensions (AST0045)

16   Google (AST0038)

17   Hft (AST0030)

18   How Do I? (AST0014)

19   IBM (AST0031)

20   Ideas for Ears (AST0029)

21   Inclusion London (AST0016)

22   Jane Cordell (AST0040)

23   Jisc (AST0010)

24   Leonard Cheshire Disability (AST0022)

25   Microsoft (AST0021)

26   Milton Keynes Council (AST0011)

27   Mr John Welsman (AST0013)

28   Name Withheld (AST0001)

29   Name Withheld (AST0003)

30   Name Withheld (AST0042)

31   Name Withheld (AST0047)

32   National Assn for Deafened People (AST0033)

33   OrCam (AST0018)

34   pcbyvoice Ltd (AST0005)

35   RNIB (AST0020)

36   RNIB (AST0044)

37   Sarah Roelofs (AST0004)

38   Scope (AST0009)

39   SEnse (AST0026)

40   Shaw Trust (AST0027)

41   Shaw Trust (AST0039)

42   Stephen Duckworth (AST0041)

43   Stephen Duckworth (AST0046)

44   Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research, University of Birmingham (AST0008)

45   WAIS Accessibility Team, University of Southampton (AST0019)

46   Wayfindr (AST0007)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	Universal Credit: the six week wait	HC 336
Second Report	A framework for modern employment	HC 352
Third Report	Protecting pensions against scams: priorities for the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill	HC 404 (HC 858)
Fourth Report	PIP and ESA assessments: claimant experiences	HC 355
Fifth Report	Universal Credit Project Assessment Reviews	HC 740
Sixth Report	British Steel Pension Scheme	HC 828
Seventh Report	PIP and ESA assessments	HC 829
Eighth Report	European Social Fund	HC 848
Ninth Report	Pension Freedoms	HC 917
First Special Report	Child Maintenance Service: Government's Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 354
Second Special Report	Self-employment and the gig economy: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 644
Third Special Report	Disability employment gap: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 652
Fourth Special Report	Victims of modern slavery: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 672
Ninth Special Report	Employment Opportunities for Young People: Government response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 827