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Dear Dominic,

At the Enterprise Bill Lords Grand Committee on Monday 2 November I promised to provide further information on the Government's actions to ensure apprenticeships are accessible for care leavers, further guidance on the Equalities Act and an update on the Little Report which looked at creating an inclusive apprenticeship offer.

Care leavers

We know that care leavers often face additional barriers to employment and require extra support. The Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills are currently looking at how apprenticeships can work best for care leavers, including ways to support care leavers transition into work.

We will continue to promote opportunities that are available for care leavers to receive extra support through traineeships and other study programmes. Many of these programmes are flexible so that providers can adapt support to the needs of the individual, with the focus of getting them ready for work. A number of local authorities already offer apprenticeships to care leavers.

Apprenticeships are jobs with training. As with all other jobs, employers make the final decision about who they hire for any apprenticeships that they have advertised. However, we do incentivise employers to take on younger apprentices who are care leavers.

Full funding for apprenticeship training is available under existing apprenticeship frameworks to eligible 19-23 year old care leavers. We are now extending this to include the new apprenticeship standards and to care-leavers up to the age of 24, from September 2016.

In addition, the Government will publish, in the spring of 2016, a refreshed strategy to improve the lives and life chances of care leavers. We anticipate this will include Government's proposals to support care leavers to enter the world of work in the coming years.

Equalities Act

Employers are subject to the same responsibilities when employing an apprentice as with any other employee, and compliance with the Equality Act is a legal requirement.

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the apprenticeship reforms to ensure they comply with the Equality Act. This can be found here: [Apprenticeship Reforms: Equality Impact Assessment](#).

Little Report

Since the Little Report the Government has done more to ensure that apprenticeships are accessible to learners with difficulties and disabilities and in 2013/14 almost 40,000 people with disabilities or learning difficulties started an apprenticeship.

The Skills Funding Agency has published an [evaluation of a series of Diversity in Apprenticeship Pilots](#) that looked at innovative ways to increase the accessibility of apprenticeships for under-represented groups. Many of these pilots had a specific focus on accessibility for people with learning disabilities/difficulties (LDD). The evaluation suggested that organisations involved in the pilots had grasped the opportunity to experiment and/or innovate to better understand and improve delivery to meet the needs of under-represented groups. It was apparent that they had also generated a groundswell of local and, in some cases, national support.

Government's Equality and Diversity Innovation Fund provided grant funding to education and training organisations to develop and disseminate innovative approaches to equality and diversity. The fund supported a number of projects focusing on disability and apprenticeships. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has produced an employer toolkit including resources and links to help employers of disabled apprentices. The Education and Training Foundation's Excellence Gateway contains a section on special educational needs and disability with resources including research and case studies.

Apprentices can apply for Access to Work funding for adjustments to the workplace and training providers can use funding to support the apprentice's learning. Reasonable adjustments are available for any qualifications within apprenticeships to ensure the apprentice has the chance to show what he or she knows or can do. Appropriate adjustments will depend on the individual and the qualification, but may include extra time, a separate room, assistive technology, use of a scribe etc.

I hope that you have found this information useful. I am also sending a copy of this letter to Baroness Sharp as she raised similar issues during the debate and will arrange for a copy of this letter to be deposited in the library of the House.

Warm regards
Lizy

BARONESS NEVILLE-ROLFE DBE CMG