

# Making it easier for disabled people wanting to move to change jobs

**New research will offer guidance to help tackle the barriers that prevent people from relocating, discouraging employers from hiring and hindering career prospects.**

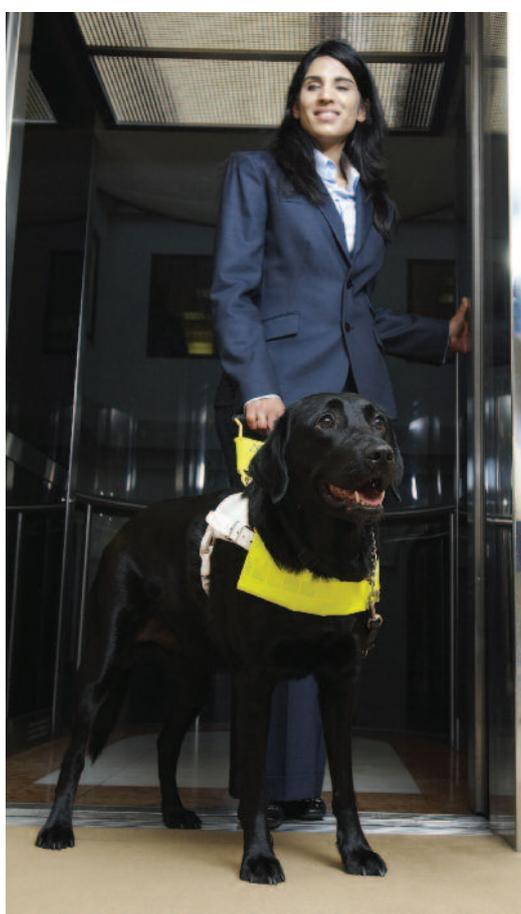
**F**or most of us, moving to a different area and starting a new job or training course is difficult enough. But for people with disabilities, it can be even harder. A hugely complex system means they often face lengthy delays getting the funding and support they need, when responsibility for their social care transfers from one local authority to another.

## **Councils slow to act**

Dave Marsland, who heads up the Centre for Applied Research and Evaluation at the University of Hull, describes a case of a disabled social worker, who relocated to advance her career. She struggled for over a year to get the local authority concerned to reassess her needs, so that she could continue to pay for 24 hour care out of a personal budget. And that was despite knowing her way around the system.

Mr Marsland is leading research that entails interviewing around 20 disabled people who have relocated for work or education/training – or who tried unsuccessfully to do so – to get a detailed picture of what they went through: the obstacles they faced; the solutions they found; and the part played by social care practitioners.

‘Trying to arrange social care is like an additional part-time or full time job,’ he suggests. ‘Employers don’t want their new employees on the phone all day trying to sort out these arrangements, and it’s very stressful and wearing for the individuals involved.’



People with disabilities are already disadvantaged in the job market, and these additional difficulties could hinder their career prospects further, he says. ‘Some employers appreciate the issues; but others, particularly during the first six months, may not, and it may colour their attitude to the employee,’ he suggests.

*'If they felt confident that the local authority had a grasp of the issues involved and understood the need for speed, efficiency, and partnership with disabled citizens, it would make a huge difference. Often they have a sense of dread that their right just to be treated equally will be a mine field, consume huge amounts of energy, and mean constant battles.'*

Dave Marsland, Centre for Applied Research and Evaluation, University of Hull

And it may deter people from contemplating a move altogether, especially knowing that they may have to go it alone for a while. 'When people move to a different area, they don't know anyone and can't draw on the informal support and care networks they have built up, so they are more reliant than ever on state provision,' he says.

#### **Bureaucracy hampers job prospects**

Poor coordination between multiple agencies in different sectors; differing eligibility criteria, threshold payments, and procedures; and budgetary cuts, which have resulted in fewer staff with heavier workloads, are all likely to play their part, he says. And delays in one part of the process inevitably have a knock-on effect for the service user elsewhere, to say nothing of inefficiencies and wasted resources.

The in-depth discussions he plans to have with 15 social workers from three local authorities, in the second part of his research, should shed some light on how well they think the system works, and how they prioritise the needs of disabled service users who move in and out of their area.

Using a pair of vignettes, informed by real

experiences, he wants to tease out their understanding of the issues, pinpoint areas for improvement, and highlight good and bad practice examples.

The findings, along with a comprehensive review of the published evidence, will help to raise awareness of the problems people with disability face more widely, and where gaps in the system lie, says Mr Marsland. And they will be used to produce some practical information to assist people with disabilities to relocate, as well as providing useful pointers for further study.

The research is timely, says Mr Marsland. It chimes with government thinking on the health and social inclusion benefits of work, and the personalisation agenda. The recently published White Paper on social care highlighted the need for the portability of personal budgets/direct payments and mooted the implementation of a national eligibility threshold.

'Our timing is better than it has ever been,' he says. 'Employment is a key plank of the Coalition's policy in terms of ending dependency on the State and being able to make a positive contribution to society through employment.'

**Project:** Relocation, portability and social care practice: investigating the barriers and solutions encountered by disabled people when moving across local authority areas for employment and education reasons

**Lead:** Dave Marsland (d.marsland@hull.ac.uk)

**Institution:** Centre for Applied Research and Evaluation, University of Hull

**Completion:** Summer 2014