

Room 4A, House of Lords
Tuesday 05 December 2017

DAVID WARDROP, Chair of Westminster UNA, welcomed everyone to the meeting. We have such an interesting subject to get our teeth into and look forward to our guest speakers telling you their thoughts. Baroness Campbell, thank you so much for arranging this room for us and for opening our meeting. You have been such a pillar to people working in the field of disability and I know you have some thoughts to share to start us off.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Well, welcome everybody to the House of Lords. I am Jane Campbell; I am a cross bench member of the House of Lords. I have been working in disability rights pretty much since I left university at the age of 22. I held several positions in the charitable and not for profit sectors, mostly in disability and later as the executive chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence. So, that is a little bit about me. I was pretty much a rebel campaigner before I learned the art of negotiation within committee. Please don't ask me which I prefer. It is good to see everyone, we have a really good turnout and we have got some fantastic speakers. Tonight we are going to get stuck into the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

When the UK ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009, it did so with very good cross party support. The then Shadow Minister, Mark Harper, complained that the government of the day was dragging its feet after the ratification of the Treaty was delayed. Interesting because cross party consensus seems a little foreign today and a little remote from that very fine beginning. But while different parties naturally have different perspectives on how best to fulfil the UK's obligations, I hope we can assume that they are equally committed to advancing disabled people's rights. Indeed, Theresa May announced her party's commitment to a society that works for everyone.

She didn't say a society that works for everyone except disabled people, so I think we should assume she wants the same as us. Indeed, next year the Government will host a global summit on the rights of persons with disabilities and our credibility in doing so rests on our recent past record and our reputation as a beacon of best practice. I say recent past, because in August our much quoted assertion of having beacon status in the world as the leader of disability rights faced a very serious challenge by the UN committee on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Committee expressed deep concern at the regressive impact on disabled people's human rights by spending cuts and policy reforms instituted since the financial crash. Their reasonable concerns included non-compliance of mental capacity law, barriers of access to justice and stagnating progress towards inclusive education. The point however of these examinations is not to pass judgment, it is to identify the chief areas for future development. Let's call it a job appraisal, not a court hearing.

So tonight, I really hope we can focus on what we are going to do and not on what has or has not been done. We can complain that it is all terrible, that our lives have become so much harder, but it actually isn't taking us anywhere. There is only one question to explore as far as I am concerned and that what needs to be done to implement the CRPD recommendations so that disabled people enjoy their full human rights everywhere, every day. For me that is what this evening is about and what I want our speakers to address and what I would like you to focus on when they finish. We are starting with Rebecca

Hilsenrath. She is Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). I certainly consider myself one of the EHRC's champions here in the Lords indeed I was one of its founding Commissioners.

REBECCA HILSENATH: Thank you to the Westminster UNA for inviting me this evening, thank you very much also to Baroness Campbell for being a champion of the Commission, as I know you are. Thank you to everyone here for coming out on a very cold evening to discuss this really important topic. I am very aware that there are a lot of people here with expertise and experience from across the piece. I want to talk briefly on how we got to where we are with the UN's concluding observations and will then talk a bit about how I see some of the work going forward. The title of this event is the UN CRPD Report on the UK's Disability Record will it trigger change? And I think the answer to that question must lie to an extent in this room. Very much coming back to what Jane was just saying, we have had the school report and the issue is: Do you take that away and do your homework and improve? I think if you see it as a tool, if you see the concluding observations as a tool.

FROM THE FLOOR: They have concluded more needs to be done, more accountability is required. We have 2,000 cases, and more failure of the law. Cases are being shut down by the use of Information Act. We have these major issues and we are not doing anything.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: That is what we are going to talk about later, so if we could let the speakers tell their stories then we can all get stuck in.

REBECCA HILSENATH: It is helpful to be reminded of how serious the situation is, so I am grateful for that and I am happy to take questions later. What I was going to say is that how we use this tool is actually down to people coming together, it is down to national human rights institutions, down to NGOs, disabled people's organisations, down to everyone saying how do we take this tool and make a difference with it.

So in terms of where we are now, and how we got here, and I do apologise for talking about the UN CRPD process in a way that may be well known to some people, but I think it is quite helpful just to re-cover it by way of a reminder.

The UN committee will carry out an examination of the UK's compliance with the Convention next year. Previously it carried out a special inquiry starting in 2014 on the basis of concerns that had been raised by disabled people's organisations about changes in the law and policy that had impacted on disabled people's rights to live independently, their standard of living and their access to work and rights to employment under the Convention. What that special report found, and it was published a year ago in November 2016, was that there is reliable evidence of grave or systematic violation of the rights of disabled people in this country. Their recommendations included a cumulative impact assessment of public spending, from 2010 going forward and that the government should continue to monitor the impact of legislative measures on disabled people. I am afraid the government response to that was largely to ignore the whole thing and I can see people nodding in the audience. The UK's last examination on its compliance with Convention in August 2017 although when I say 'business as usual' it actually was the first standard examination since the country joined the Convention. The committee gave over 80 recommendations to the government in terms of improving compliance. Many of those recommendations were reiterations of

comments made the previous report which, as I say, were ignored by the government. I am not going to go through all 80, but I will touch on a few of them.

Recommendations included that the Convention should be incorporated so that there would be domestic remedies available for enforcement when rights are breached, that disabled people and their organisations should be fully engaged including around designing strategic action plans. Further, implementing the Convention shouldn't be done without consulting them; that protection for equality and non-discrimination should be brought into force, including parts of the Equality Act 2010 that have not yet been implemented. The recommendations talk about raising awareness campaign, tackling prejudice and stereotypes and about identifying gaps in accessibility for disabled people including housing, transport, and provision of information. It talks about stepping up efforts to ensure equal Access to Justice. This covered things like training the judiciary on the rights for disabled people, implementing reasonable adjustments in the judicial system and access to legal aid. It also talks about ensuring that disabled people are in a position to make their own decisions about the legal processes they get involved with. It recommended tackling abuse and hate crime, including ending the use of restraint across justice, health care and education in relation to disability. It recognized disabled people's rights to live independently and be part of the community, including recognition that this requires adequate funding where it doesn't currently exist, stepping up efforts to include disabled children in mainstream schools and providing targeted support can realise their potential. Tackling barriers to health care including for those with learning disabilities, developing an effective employment policy including ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made by employers. Ensuring that disabled people can access adequate social protection, and that is not only about the need to carry out a cumulative impact assessment of recent and forthcoming reforms to the social protection system but it is also about recognising that it will lead to additional costs where necessary. Removing barriers for disabled people and exercising their right to vote, which is incredibly important, that must be done and ensuring that disabled people can exercise their right to participate in cultural life, that includes access to heritage sites and sporting venues and perhaps last but not least, collecting comprehensive data. It is important to recognise intersectionality here, it is not just about people with disabilities but also other protected characteristics, so we are looking at disabled women and disabled people from BME communities and so forth. That is not all 80 recommendations but I hope it gives you a flavour.

It is important to recognize the work that was done in putting together the shadow and the other submissions made to the UN. The Equality and Human Rights Commission together with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Northern Ireland Equality Commission submitted a comprehensive shadow report containing over 130 recommendations.

EHRC also funded civil society organisations and individual disabled people to go to Geneva to put their case. Disabled people's organisations themselves really led the way here in terms of being able to report by expertise, by experience and their knowledge of the changes needed to make disabled people's rights a reality in this country.

I'm just going to speak for a couple of minutes on what happens next. The next examination of the UK by the UN under the Convention will take place in 2023. But there is also a follow up report due next year specifically on independent living, living standards and rights to

work. We need to be looking forward to both of those processes and advocating to make sure all of us together in this room and everybody else ensures that these UN's recommendations are not allowed to stay in a computer or on a shelf. We need to be at the forefront of this work talking to decision makers, and including them in our advocacy and influencing in work.

I am going to talk briefly about what my organisation is doing then I am going to stop, because it will be helpful to hear what others are doing. In terms of our advocacy strategy, we are shortly going to be releasing a Plain English version of the CRPD report concluding observations to make them more accessible and in terms of the language used, but also in terms of the format. We are hoping it is going to help many more people get involved in understanding the significance of the concluding observations. As part of a broader piece of work, we propose to develop an online tracker. This is based on work that has been piloted in New Zealand by its National Human Rights Institution there where the concluding observations across a number of different international human rights treaties are being compiled in a way that makes it easier to search for the UN's many recommendations for this and other UN treaties. It is about having the tool to improve scrutiny, improve transparency and make it easier to hold government to account. Secondly, we have written together with the other national human rights and equality commissions to the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health, specifically to raise the importance of the CRPD concluding observations and to ask for a meeting in the New Year. We are going to be working to ensure that the work of the UN CRPD and other conventions is used to inform our legal strategy, where at all possible. Just touching on one example of this, we have been intervening in the case of Luke Davey against Oxfordshire County Council. This was a case of a man whose reasonable adjustments had been funded for I think 20 or 30 years, and whose funding was cut quite dramatically because the County Council was looking from a perspective of saving money as opposed to from a perspective of analysing and identifying what needs were in terms of his ability to live independently. The revised package that he was awarded would (a) have meant letting go of the carers who had been with him for several years, and (b) it would have addressed only his basic living needs. It wouldn't have allowed him to go out into the community or to go and see his friends. Our position was, how does the UN CRPD, and particularly Art.19 of the Convention, the right to independent living, fit in here? We argued the Care Act had to be interpreted in the light of Art.19. I have to say we lost, but it was a really important process in terms of bringing Art.19 into argument in the High Court. We believe this is something we need to do all the time; we are getting some advice from counsel on how we can incorporate it in domestic legal work. Other work we are doing at the moment includes working on educational outcomes for children with special educational needs and other disabilities, the review of the Mental Health Act, use of restraint from a human rights and equalities concern that we are facing as a result of Brexit. Coming back on something that you said, Jane, I have spoken on a number of times in Brussels in relation to the work that we are trying to do in terms of protecting fundamental rights in the EU withdrawal bill and through the process of Brexit. I am struck by the esteem in which this country is held in terms of the contributions it has made to non-discrimination and to protecting rights in Europe, and I think that is something we would need to hold on to because this country has global status and it needs to be mindful of those achievements and ensure it doesn't slip back.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Rebecca for walking us round such a huge area and making it easy to grasp the enormity of the issue. The things that we can actually do in practice are what it is all about. I now move to Kamran Mallick. Kamran is Chief Executive of Disability Rights UK and Kamran is going to talk to us about what Disability Rights UK has been doing in this area and some of the issues that have been coming to light since the Treaty report.

KAMRAN MALLICK: Thank you very much Jane and thank you to the Association for inviting me. I joined Disability Rights UK in July this year and within my first couple of months the UN CRPD was happening and we went to Geneva. I can see in the room other organisations that were there with us as colleagues from disabled people's organisations. I wanted to illustrate through a case study the value of people's dignity, people's human rights, which is relevant today. I want to start off by getting you to think back to when you were in your mid to late 20s, or if you are younger than that, what you are doing now, in terms of thinking about where you might be. Maybe you are living at home or perhaps in a shared house or flat with friends or other people. Or perhaps you have met someone and decided to buy a house together and make it into a home and start a family. You may be climbing the career ladder in a job that you wish to pursue? Also I want you to think about what your social life was like when you were 28 or if you are younger than that, what it is like now? What do you look forward to on a Friday evening? Do you have a wide circle of friends that you spend a lot of time with? Maybe you met them through school, college, university or through work.

So think about it. Thursday evening and you are planning your weekend. We look forward to the excitement of what is going to happen, you meet up with friends, get dressed up, go out, you're kind of pushing the limits of what you can and shouldn't be doing. We all do that. Perhaps you have an eye on someone and you are thinking, "I will go and ask them out and see what happens. It is okay when you are young and you get turned down, you bounce back and move on. I think all those things that we do at that age and throughout our lives build character and help to define who we are as human beings and as individuals. Things that drive our ambitions, hopes and desires. This is what the CRPD is attempting to do, ensuring that everyone has a right to those things. Art.19 has already been mentioned, which is about living independently and being included in the community. The Convention recognises the equal right of all disabled people to live in the community with choices equal to others and commits Government to taking effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by disabled people and their full inclusion and participation in the community including ensuring that disabled people have the opportunities to choose where and with whom they live on equal basis with others and are not obliged to live within a particular living arrangement. This means disabled people have access to the range of in home residential and other community support services including personal assistants necessary to support for them to live and feel included in the community and to prevent isolation and segregation.

I recently met someone called Laki; you may have read her story in the *Independent*. It really struck a chord with me about the pure injustice of what was going on and decided that I would take her case up and making sure that she secures her rights. I subsequently discovered that other people are involved in the case. Jane I discovered had also taken it up so we are going to work together.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: We had the same thoughts.

KAMRAN MALLICK: I wanted get Laki to come down today but unfortunately she was taken into hospital with pneumonia. However she wanted her voice to be heard today and these are some quotes of hers that I will read. She spends her Saturday evenings - remember she is 28 - indoors at home in her room and has her meals in the evening by herself. She isn't able to mix with anyone else in the place where she lives. From her room she can hear the noise of the elderly residents shouting in the dining room as the staff of the care home try to calm them down. Most weekends her friends go out. They want her to go with them but she doesn't have the support to enable her to do that. She hears stories from them about going out to clubs and gigs, or just to see a film or out for dinner and socialise. She desperately wants to join them but isn't able to. She says she is 28 and she wants to have a social life but doesn't really have one. Laki has spinal muscular atrophy, is a wheelchair user and she needs 24 hours a day support. She had to move out of her family home at the age of 21 and has been moved from residential home to residential home ever since. The home she is currently in is a home for elderly people with learning difficulties and she has no relationship with any of the other residents, she spends most of her time in her room. She does work, she has held down a job for the past 4 years. It is a zero hours contract job but she is incredibly proud of having that role. She is a receptionist. Her employer she said has always been very supportive; she doesn't want to let her job go. It gives her a sense of independence, a sense of some freedom. She said: It makes me who I am. I earn my own money, I am not on benefits. I am trying to live the independent life that I dream of. So when it is put to her that she needs to think about quitting her job, she said that really hurts her. "They want me to quit my job and so that they can put me anywhere". She was referring to social workers and other people that have been managing her care and support.

The residential care home in which she lives in has curfew of around nine o'clock. This means that she isn't really able to have friends round because they don't like any noise in the care home and visitors are often asked to leave. She often works until about ten o'clock at night, and she sometimes wishes that her friends could come back with her. She talked a lot to me about her friends going to concerts and going on holidays and while she loves to hear all that it also really hurts because she can't actually do that. She talked to me about crying herself to sleep at night when what she wants to do is be out. The care package that she relied on live independently over the last few years has been drastically reduced to a point where she only receives about 3 and a half hours of support a day and about an hour and a half overnight. She uses it to get her to work, and to get her back home. She has an hour of support during the day and she basically uses that to go to the toilet just the once. In June this year she was effectively evicted by the company that runs the care home after she made a number of complaints to them about her requirements and restrictions that they placed on her. It was her birthday and she invited some friends round to celebrate with her but by about ten o'clock, the manager of the care home said to her that the curfew was at nine o'clock and everyone had to leave, and that her friends had overstayed their welcome. She is refusing to leave the home because she is fearful that she won't be able to get to work. She said: "I am just fighting to remain in work and hold on to the little independence that I have". The package of support that I have barely covers my human rights, I feel isolated, depressed, and I have gone through several periods of feeling suicidal.

She has been told by social workers that instead of receiving the support she needs for her toilet and using the bathroom she should use incontinence pads; she has also been told by one professional that maybe she ought to just drink one glass of water so she doesn't have to go to the toilet as much.

FROM THE FLOOR: I have heard exactly the same situation for someone else who was told to use nappies.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: That was a separate case, but you are right.

KAMRAN MALLICK: At that point she really got upset and ended our phone conversation. This is somebody who lives in this city. My message to all of us in this room is that we need to take what the UN has said and use it as a tool, exactly to make sure we hold government to account. We can sit and blame different governments and different professionals, different politicians but what we want is change now. My message to disabled people's organisations and civil society is that we need to come together and work towards a common cause. I believe that the different approaches and contributions of all of our organisations will be instrumental in making the changes that we want to see. We need people doing direct campaigning but equally we need organisations that are prepared to sit round the table with people who make decisions. I think the combination of the two is what we want and as Executive Director of Disability Rights UK, I am determined to make that happen. We are doing everything we can to bring together disabled people's organisations and building on the links that we forged very successfully when we went to the UN CRPD. Next week, disabled people's organisations are coming to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to consider next steps of what we can do to follow up on the UN recommendations.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Kamran. I think we all, I looked round the room when Kamran was telling Laki's story because the story wasn't just about one thing, and there were several actual human rights that were being breached throughout Laki's stay, even down to her nutrition. Laki, has the same disability as I do. For us it is very dangerous to eat certain kinds of food and she wasn't receiving the kinds of nutrition that she needed and that would end up with her getting quite ill. So there is the human rights dimension just in terms of receiving decent food and nutrition, so it is quite salutary. Thank you for that, I think it grounds us.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: We are going to hang on to questions, because Debbie Abrahams has come. She is Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the reason she could not be with us earlier is that she led today's opposition debate on universal credit. Thank you, Debbie, for coming straight here. We have had brilliant speeches from Kamran and from Rebecca; Kamran has spoken about an individual who many parts of her life, her human rights are being transgressed. It was very powerful, and that has helped us to better understand the everyday human rights of people, (especially disabled people). Meanwhile Rebecca has provided a global view of how our human rights have been monitored and some of the recommendations that have come out from the UN committee. So, Debbie, we look forward to hearing your perspective.

DEBBIE ABRAHAMS: Well, first of all thank you so much for inviting me to come and speak here today. I am Debbie Abrahams, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary. Prior to that I was the Shadow Minister for Disabled People and 2 weeks into my appointment, the UN committee actually came to the UK and invited me to submit evidence. I was interviewed and was subsequently able to provide a more complete dossier of the issues across all government departments in terms of their failure to live up to the expectations of the Articles of the Convention. So for example, if we consider the cuts that there have been to health and social care, £6 billion has been cut from local authority budgets, a direct impact on disabled people. In the Health Service, specialist nurses are in short supply; if we think about our public transport system, only one in 5 stations is fully accessible. In my constituency of Oldham East and Saddleworth, we have a station where you have a bridge to get over to the second platform, only 2 platforms and a bridge so you can go to Manchester but you can't come back! When the government was looking at electrification, they didn't even think of trying to improve accessibility at the same time. They were going to have to raise all the bridges associated with project but they didn't even think about it. These are some of the real issues that we are facing.

Cuts in legal aid affecting access to justice, including hate crime, all different parts of the criminal justice system under real pressure, with none of it being recognised within the system. Moving on specifically to the areas that relate to social security or social protection, as the Articles refer to in the Convention, we need to go back to the 2012 Welfare Reform Act and the cuts that were announced then. Scope carried out an analysis that showed 3.7m disabled people have suffered a cut of about £28 billion. More recently, the EHRC's report on the cumulative assessment of spending cuts and tax changes showed that an adult disabled person will have lost about £2500 for an adult disabled person in the same household as a disabled child; it is a loss of about £5500 a year. This is in the context of an economy that we know has had problems, but we also know that we have the highest rate of employment for decades. What has happened around disabled people and unemployment?

We have seen the disability employment gap stubbornly staying at about 30 per cent; no real change there. The 2016 Welfare Reform Act just added to that, the cuts around the Employment Support allowance (ESA), work related activity groups, a loss of £1,500 a year as I witness in my own constituency having people coming to me in absolute dire circumstances. We have tragically seen people take their own lives, we have seen more punitive work capability assessments and if you look at it in the round is anyone surprised that the UN committee came up with their assessment that there have been grave systematic violations against disabled people? When the committee reviewed progress this August, it found no significant progress had been undertaken. It still amounted to a human catastrophe. And you know, we are still a very rich country. I think some of the choices that have been taken, which have disproportionately affected disabled people, disproportionately affected a number of vulnerable groups, but particularly disabled people, I think it shames us all. It really does.

When I was Shadow Minister for Disabled People, I secured consensus from all our shadow departments that disabled people's rights had to be integrated in terms of all that we do. When the General Election was held we met with disabled people, met with Disabled People's Organisations (DPO), listened to what they had to say, to look at what needed to change. We then put together our manifesto with and for disabled people, *Nothing about*

you without you. It sets out under the different UN Articles, the actions that we would take with about 37 specific pledges in there. The Social Security Commission that we set up will look at how we take that from a pledge to actually being policy ready and I make this commitment publically, I have made it before, this is not just a document, it is alive, it is a co-production of policy.

One of our recommendations is that we incorporate the UN Convention into UK law. We have a team of people who are looking at the different forms it could take. So will it make a difference? It should make a difference but I see no difference in terms of the change of the current Government's approach. It really is unacceptable. But we will keep on pushing and putting them under pressure. Thank you very much.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Thank you, Debbie. I am sure people will have some questions about where you see your policy formulating and translating into practical reality for disabled people. I am sure that there will be in the questions for all our speakers.

- (Palantypist Break).

FROM THE FLOOR: I am a disabled black woman with an unseen disability. My frustration is that nothing seems to change. *Disability Rights UK* and others are our voice at a micro-level but Government has to take the lead; no one is there to push for the implementation of the 80 plus CRPD recommendations. What are the sanctions for UN breaches?

FROM THE FLOOR – Yes the UK needs to suffer UN sanctions. Disability is not a business but a problem that needs to be tackled. There has to be proper accountability for Disability policy.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL – What would you like to see, sanctions for breaches of the CRPD Treaty?

REBECCA HILSENATH – Our policy on Brexit is that there must not be any dilution of existing protections. It may be an opportunity to lobby for a further strengthening of rights via the incorporation of UN International Human Rights Treaties into UK law as has happened in Wales with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We will need to see how that works out.

DEBBIE ABRAHAMS – the incorporation of the CRPD Treaty part of our manifesto commitment. Yes, the UK is in serious breach of the Convention but what does this mean to the Government aside from mild embarrassment? Internal opposition is difficult but we have managed to scupper punitive assessments and secured a major concession on universal credit.

KAMRAN MALLICK – Disability Rights UK will use the report and do all that it can to ensure that the rights of disabled people are not further watered down. For example, we will carefully study proposed secondary legislation (introduced due to Brexit) and alert the UK Committee to any potential breaches. There is sadly no real sanction power. How do you shame a Government that has none?

FROM THE FLOOR – It is a business; control, control, control, and nothing gets done except talk.

(Palantypist break ends)

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Well that is exactly what we want to talk about here. .

KAMRAN MALLICK: The call to all of us is to unite on these issues and work together.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: There was a lady at the back in the white shirt, what did you want to say.

FROM THE FLOOR: It was a big problem when I talk to people where I come from; they don't seem to think about life as a disabled person. I was speaking to a friend who invited me out somewhere and I said I couldn't because I needed to be home by ten o'clock. When I explained, she was quite shocked but then people don't really understand what I have to go through. I spoke about social care and going to work capability assessments. I go to a place which is a bit like a zoo; it is horrid and it can make you feel ill - well it does me - and people don't recognise that. They say you are all right (fit for work). It was really awful. I made myself ill with nerves because I had to go. I did think change will come from people campaigning for change. How can we get the people, all the people to recognise what disabled people go through and get more people saying no, we are not having this, it is wrong.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Being united together is a really important feature of this.

FROM THE FLOOR: I want to quickly preface, because it does context the question, I am in a very similar position to Laki. I am 20, don't have a job, I had to pack up university, I don't receive any social care, I live in a shared flat where I am discriminated against by both of my flat mates because of my disability. What I wanted to ask was how do we change attitudes? It seems at the minute that we are just a problem. How do we change the narrative to give disabled people the help that they need rather than how can we minimise it to as little help as we can give? This is reinforced when you go to the capability assessment. It is about them trying to prove as much as they can against you, it is not to give you the support it is trying to tick off as many things as possible in order to say that you don't need that. It is not worth it for disabled people. How do we change that attitude so it is about need? You can't arbitrarily decide 60 per cent or 40 or 20 per cent needs support. They all need it.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: What can we do to help you so that you can work, live and participate? It would be nice to start with that. Thank you. That is really important.

FROM THE FLOOR: I used to be on the UK Youth Parliament so I am active, engaged within the community. I did my dissertation at Uni on the barriers that disabled people encounter to employment. It is one and a half years, since I graduated. Most companies have little more than a paper commitment to employing disabled people. Some companies say they have a quota. My question is what is the Government doing to help disabled people to get a job in the public sector as well as in the private sector? What is the government doing to implement this type of strategy so that companies recruit more disabled people and getting them to see them that they are capable of doing exactly the same work as others if they have the right assistance?

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Moving from nice paper policies and the round tables and the involving of disabled people, what comes next? When does it actually happen in practice? Is that what you are asking?

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes, because it is all about companies following the regulations. I have applied for many jobs. I go for a job which I think I am quite capable of doing, but as soon as they see you walk in and they hear you communicate, the prejudice that you are less capable of doing the job kicks in.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: I think many of us have had that experience.

FROM THE FLOOR: I feel that government, both Labour and Conservative, should feel ashamed. I don't think we are doing enough. We need to really push harder. Somebody talked about sanctions and was told that there cannot be sanctions. So if there cannot be sanctions it means we are on our own. We have to get together and push as hard as we can. If you write thousands of reports, nobody is going to care, so we all have to come together and do it ourselves, disabled people, disabled organisations, and parents of disabled people. I have a disabled daughter. My other question is about the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Is it meant to punish disabled people? I took my daughter to a PIP assessment, at 7 in the morning. She was in wheelchair; she had these round metal rings round her legs, held like that. We couldn't even get into the room. They had to come and move chairs and other things there. She was kept there for more than 45 minutes, and at the end, had to keep lifting her leg down, twisting it this side, just to make her comfortable. The lady said, "Well you have to still be here, I have got another 45 minutes to go". I said, "I am not staying. My daughter is in pain. What do you want to assess?" I don't think all those people who undertake this assessment are really qualified to do it. They are occupational therapists.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: (to Debbie Abrahams)
Tomorrow, what would you do differently?

DEBBIE ABRAHAMS: We will listen to disabled peoples voices including people here, and have pledged to do make a difference. My last point was about why have some campaigns been successful in changing the government's attitude, behaviours and policies whilst others have not? We (Labour) have not done enough around disabled people and the point that was made around the need for a mass movement, in which people all come together. It is not party political, it should concern anybody that feels strongly that this is not right. We all need to say this is not right and consider what can we change now and what can we change in the future? In terms of the discrimination that you have been through, (I am sorry I don't know your name), my daughter is a little bit older but she had a similar experience. She was a very fit young woman then suddenly got ME and went from working all hours, playing loads of netball to being able to do very little. There wasn't much sympathy or understanding from her house mates, it meant that she was no longer able to do the same sort of things that they were doing. So how do we change attitudes? It is about changing the culture and culture depends on leadership. What we need to do, is to work together to change the attitudes of leaders as it is leaders who can actually change things. What is the government doing around stopping discrimination at work? We know 9 out of 10 disabilities are acquired, so what is the Government doing to enable people to get into work and stay in work.

I am not a spokesperson for the government, but I do know about their disability confidence scheme. I think there needs to be more such initiatives. It is not enough for people to say yes, we welcome applications from disabled people; it needs to be tangible in terms of the actions they are going to take to stop the obvious discrimination that is still happening at work.

We have said we want to scrap the assessments. The culture in the social security system is focused on punishment. It is about pushing people off social security; all the assessment is just about that. It is not meant to be a fair assessment. As Jane was saying, it is about understanding need and the tools to enable you to get to work, what about the transport, what about housing conditions, what do you need to enable you to live a full life? And that is what is missing. That is what is really missing and it is so short-sighted really.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: There's somebody in the room called Rachel, Rachel, do give us something to hope for; I believe you are developing a project called *Looking Positive*.

FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. I would like to inject some hope and positivity here. My name is Rachel Hockey. I work with a production network, which is a worldwide organisation that supports young people to learn about event production, to light sound stages, and all the different roles around putting on a show. I set the company up in response to finding it very tough myself as a woman in technical production with the help of lots of inspirational young people who in turn provided me with the support and encouragement that I felt that I didn't have myself. Over the last 7 years I have worked for all sorts of different events. I directed and produced the Olympic torch relay concerts, the Hyde Park finale, and events at Wembley, the O2, Royal Albert Hall, we have been everywhere. We train site crews (we are never normally in a meeting room or a classroom).

We are going to launch a new exciting sister organisation that is going to operate within every event we do. It is called *Even Ground*. Its purpose is to support people with disabilities within technical production and within events. The idea is to bring a network together of the sadly very few but key organisations that provide such support across live events, like our esteemed colleagues here, Elsa and Gideon.

They ensure everything is accessible at the venues and offer a whole wide range of support. This is not just a fancy idea; I am sat here with inspirational professionals already working at the highest level of the event production industry. Scuba is our head of sound and has worked with lots of the biggest suppliers across the country. He was part of the Olympic torch finale, helped drive trucks, and was part of John Leonard's space. I only learned much later on that he also has Asperger's which I found out because he didn't need any travel expenses because he had a Freedom Pass. Charlie came to me this year, and I met her at an event about women in production. She had been told that she would never have a career in music because sometimes she uses a wheelchair. After a little chat I found out that not only was she passionate about music, she was training in the use of Excel spreadsheets. She has been my amazing production assistant on all my shows over the last year and is an excellent training whip-cracking production manager. There is one other girl who couldn't be here today; she had to rest because she had an operation today. Shane, suffered 70 per cent burns as a baby and set up her own learning event management charity, which is pioneering support for over 18 year olds which currently don't get support from the NHS, once you get to 18, within the burns community. She is setting up incredible inspirational workshops and events and is going to be reaching out to the Grenfell fire victim communities. The *Even Ground* network is a space set up, and designed by Scuba, initially a website where for the first time you will be able to go to one place and find all the different existing supports that there are if you are living with disability. It is not just an information place, because I can tell you working from the inside that there are thousands of incredibly talented people living

with disability who are already professionals across the industry, from artists to lighting designers to stage managers, all sorts of pioneering people, just like these guys here. So we are really excited to be launching this. We will be starting our first project of the season, working alongside David Wardrop at the UN peace keeping ceremony on the 23 May, 2018, which is held at the Cenotaph. *Even Ground* team will operate the sound and pioneering there. I can say that these guys are not only fantastic at what they do but there is an extra tenacity there to be that organised to be able to get around the obstacles of ordinary life. It takes courage, commitment, dedication and organisation which comes in droves and is such an excellent tool within event production.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: I really liked what you said. I am pretty ashamed because no government is going to solve this one alone; it has got to be a civil society push. When civil society really comes together, really wants to do something, then things begin to happen. In fact a very rich businessmen came to me only last week and said: "I have decided to give up working in the city, I have earned millions and actually what I want to do now is invest in disabled entrepreneurs." He said "just call me the Dragons Den for disabled people with various ideas that they want to bring to my table. I will invest in them and I will take..." I won't say how much he said but it was very, very low. These are the kind of ideas that will bring us together and help us to be, mutually supportive of one another.

I am going to take 2 more questions. I know there is a man at the back wearing a blue sweat shirt who is very keen to say something. Could you be very brief please?

FROM THE FLOOR: I want to talk about young children who have disabilities, and their medical needs, I work with a team of teachers who train up staff in mainstream schools and nurseries to raise awareness and promote inclusive practice in schools for children and young people. I would like to mention that Michael Gove when he was education secretary pursued a policy that had an adverse impact on inclusion for disabled and other special needs students. If you factor together the highly academic curriculum and the fetish for exam results and league table positions and the relentless obsession with academisation, you end up with a situation where once you get into secondary school – and I have anecdotal evidence of this – schools indicating that they can't actually meet disabled students' needs. What they mean is that a disabled child will probably bring down their position in the league tables. That is the perception of physical disability. It is a disgrace, OFSTED doesn't do anything about this at all. They rarely go in and look at inclusive practice and skills. They might do occasionally, but their focus is on data, spreadsheets, so called progress and targets, that is what our schools provide to the exclusion of everything else. If you look at the statistics of SEND students (those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), they transition from primary to secondary, you will see a reasonable equitable spread across primary, but when they go into secondary, some schools never had any. I think that is something that your colleague, the shadow Education Secretary needs to think about, because that needs to be addressed. It is a serious problem, it is causing huge amount of distress anguish and of course expense and it is holding these children back every day it goes on

FROM THE FLOOR: My name is Billy, I work for HFT, and we support adults with learning disabilities. I was lucky to accompany two of the people we support to Geneva to give

evidence as part of the UN investigation. There has been a lot of talk tonight about civil society working together to put pressure on the Government. Obviously the DPOs have a formal role in the process under the Convention. My question is how can charities like the one I work for work more effectively within the DPOs to ensure that we are all saying the same thing and speaking to the right people? I want to, make sure that the beneficiaries of the service that we offer actually have a meaningful engagement in this process. It is not just people like me talking to government, it is people we support talking to government.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Thank you very much. That is one for you Kamran, because that is very much one of your passions.

KAMRAN MALLICK: I was really pleased that Billy's organization was able to support two people to give evidence in Geneva. People don't think about what it is like to be a disabled person, the value and the unique element of DPOs is that our lived experience is what drives what we do and that lived experience is equally valid when it is coming from individuals from an organisation that isn't a DPO. With regard to my DPO, *Disability Rights UK*, please look at our website and become members because then you can add your voice to the work that we do.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: I run a group here called the independent living strategy group and I am desperately trying to get organisations, including big businesses, to work collaboratively with smaller DPOs and to share resources so we can come up with good products at the end. You will be pleased to know that two members of the House of Lords recently brought together all the large organisations and we asked them to speak with one voice on the UN Convention on Human Rights, and they have. They heard us. They have to!

FROM THE FLOOR: My son is an ex IP prisoner, and I want to increase awareness about people who are dyslexic and dyspraxic. Thousands of prisoners are being discriminated against, because they have dyslexia. They are unable to satisfy the parole board and a number are doing double the sentence. An article in the *Daily Mail* revealed that a man is trapped in prison because he has low IQ and has dyslexia though dyslexia does not affect your normal intelligence. My question is: How can we get proper support for such prisoners? I had a court case last year; it was easier for me to plead guilty because I had difficulty accessing legal aid because of my impairment. I had significant difficulty trying to make a solicitor understand my point of view and to get the access I needed. I got a call just before the court case I am sorry we can't defend you; your legal aid has been turned down.

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: I think that is a story in itself. I am going to leave people with that. Access to Justice is the right of every citizen in this country, and the barriers to Access to Justice are very well documented in the UN report.

We have run out of time, but thank you very much for your contributions, thank you.

DAVID WARDROP (Vote of thanks): Before I thank our speakers, I want you to put up your hand if you were born after 1981? The reason I say that is because in that year I attended the very first meeting in this country for the International Year of Disabled People. So before you were born, we were beginning to tackle this issue. And here we are, all these years later, listening to these stories. The dysfunctionality of successive governments' policy

on disability is plain to see. But, it is part of a much larger picture. Many of you will know about the sustainable development goals which are aiming to make a better world by 2030. There are 17 goals: goal 10 applies to what we have been talking about today.

The UK aid strategy outlines UK's ambition to be a world leader delivering on the promise of 'leave no one behind'. It commits the UK to prioritise work that targets the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and the most excluded and so on. And to maintain our commitment to be a global authority on disability data so that every person counts. We have been asking the British government to develop a strategy since 2016, and there still isn't one. In an echo here of what Baroness Campbell was mentioning, the NGO community has said: Well if the government won't do it, we will do it. And this is extremely embarrassing because there is a strategy to which almost every government has committed itself to do one, and we haven't done one. I have a list here of the tiny countries which have done it. They have done their homework and we (the UK) have not. In 2016 and 2017 we were missing, from the list of those confirming we could review our Sustainable Development goals,

So whilst you are collectively focusing on this particular issue of disabilities, it is part of a much, much wider range of shortcomings of the government which frankly many of us do not understand. It is not just work and pensions, it is international development and education and all those other government departments which should be working in a joined up way. I thank our speakers for sharing their views with us, and also the excellent contributions from the floor,

Thank you. (Applause).

BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: Thank you everyone. We can go home now.