

## **The Cycle of Deprivation**

Research on disabled people in the UK, led by the Wolfson Research Institute at Durham University, has found that since the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), the employment of disabled people has decreased and that this has disproportionately affected the least skilled workers, thereby increasing inequalities.

The DDA was in part introduced to help tackle the long-standing association in the UK between disability, poverty, social exclusion, and low employment rates: only 50% of working age disabled people are in employment compared to 80% for those without a disability.

However, a recent study which investigated the employment rates of disabled people in the UK before and after the implementation of the DDA found that whilst the employment rates of non-disabled people increased over the period 1990 to 2003, the employment rates for disabled people decreased by an average of 7%. Although there were no differences between the employment rates of disabled men and women, the Durham-led study found that the employment rates of disabled people from the lowest occupational groups decreased by 11% after the DDA whilst the employment rates of disabled people in professional occupations did not change significantly during the study period.

The results suggest two things:

1. that the inequality in employment between disabled and non-disabled people has increased since the DDA, and
2. that there are significant social inequalities in the employment consequences of disability in the UK which the DDA legislation has failed to rectify.

Awareness of the DDA is low amongst UK employers: according to the Department for Work and Pensions, only 63% of employers were aware of the DDA. Furthermore as the DDA employment provisions now apply to all companies regardless of size, awareness, implementation (and therefore perhaps employment rates) may increase in the future.

This suggests, that to be more effective in enabling disabled people into employment, anti-discrimination legislation needs to place less emphasis on the individual making the claim and more on the employer to enact best practice. In addition, awareness of the DDA amongst employers needs to be increased and the provisions of the act better enforced.

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