

When I talk to disabled people what I hear is that they want us to help level the playing field so that there is real opportunity and choice to get the jobs they want or the support they need. That is why we will continue and work to improve programmes like Access to Work, which helps disabled people with such things as travel costs to work or specialist equipment or adaptations to their work place. In 2010/11 we will have spent over £100 million on Access to Work, more than ever before.

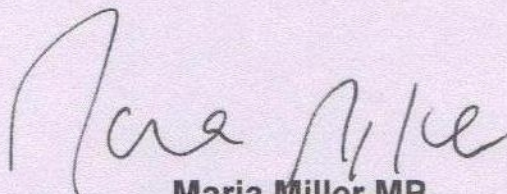
Following the publication on 9 June of Liz Sayce's independent review of specialist disability employment programmes, on 11 July I published the Government's response, and a consultation on a number of the specific recommendations. Amongst other recommendations the Sayce review set out how Access to Work could be improved and expanded further. I agree that Access to Work has the potential to help more disabled people and to be delivered more effectively. The Government has protected employment spending to support disabled people over the Spending Review and will be considering, as part of the consultation, how to prioritise this expenditure to ensure it is used most effectively; the Sayce report suggests that 50 per cent more disabled people could be supported with the same money.

We will not repeat the mistakes of the past and write disabled people off on benefits. The Work Choice programme introduced last October is expected to support many more people with significant disability-related barriers into work each year than its predecessor programmes and the Work Programme will provide more tailored employment support to disabled people.

I recognise that there is a great deal of speculation which has caused undue anxiety. I will continue working with disabled people and organisations that have an interest in disability policy to make sure that people have the right information about these changes, and to allay concerns.

I hope this reply is helpful, and I wish you a successful conference in October.

Best wishes



Maria Miller MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Disabled People