

## **SUPPORT FOR DISABLED AND NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE**

### **Submission from South-East Cornwall Constituency Labour Party to the Work, Pensions and Equalities Policy Commission 2019**

South East Cornwall CLP welcomes the proposals to rebuild a just social security system. We would like to address the questions in the consultation about the needs of disabled people; specifically in support of autistic / neurodivergent people.

We note from the Labour Autism / Neurodiversity Manifesto that autistic, dyslexic, and dyspraxic people, and people with attention deficit disorders, Tourette's, obsessive-compulsive disorders and other neurodivergent conditions experience a great deal of hostility, distress and disadvantage in our society, and that strong Labour policies on this issue can make a real difference to people's lives. Many environments and essential spheres of life are hostile to dyspraxic, dyslexic, autistic and other neurodivergent people; including workplaces and the present social security system.

The Tory government has cut welfare benefits and subjected claimants to punitive 'work capability tests'. Neurodivergent people are among those who have been driven to suicide by benefit sanctions.

We call for

- Work Capability Assessments to be scrapped and for relevant health issues to be addressed using medical professionals with appropriate knowledge of individuals' conditions and disabilities.
- For the social security system to be delivered by paid public servants via networks accessible to everyone, including provision of face-to-face support for all who need it.
- Entitlement conditions that are straightforward, inclusive and available to all; and abolishing all sanctions.

Changes to the social security system need to go alongside changes to work. Only 15% of autistic working-age adults are in full-time employment; a further 9% are in part-time employment. ADHD adults frequently have poor occupational outcomes, such as frequently changing jobs or long-term unemployment. This is not because only a fraction of neurodivergent people can work: it is because workplaces are hostile environments. Barriers and discrimination in employment include: recruitment, interviews and assessments; the sensory environment at work; social pressures; lack of control over working conditions; and insecure employment.

We support the calls in the Labour Autism / Neurodiversity Manifesto to:

- Place a legal requirement on employers to make workplaces and working conditions more equal and accessible and less hostile, including through adopting a neurodiversity policy and training for all staff.
- Job applications and interviews to be accessible, non-discriminatory, and include support – for example, alternatives to written applications for dyslexic applicants.
- Replace Work Capability Assessments with Workplace Accessibility Assessments.
- Pursue a full employment policy, with the right to an appropriate, secure job for all who can work; remove the cap on Access to Work; and restore Remploy as an employer of disabled people.

***South East Cornwall Labour, June 2019***