

James,

In early 2012, I wrote to you about my concerns regarding the closure of Remploy factories and other facilities for the disabled. My disabled cousin's (and thirty of her colleagues) employment at Ludon Industries near Luton finished when the establishment was closed by Bedfordshire County Council. Now, almost two years on, my cousin is still 'on the scrapheap' as are the vast majority of her former colleagues.

An article in the 1st November 2013 edition of Private Eye discusses this issue. It says: "The government has long defended its decision to turf disabled workers out of Remploy factories by claiming they were 'ghettos' and that, having consulted widely, disabled people would rather be integrated in mainstream jobs. But the latest employment figures show how ill-thought-through the closures have been. Disability groups and unions alike had all warned that mainstream factory and office jobs were often inaccessible and poorly supported. As the final Remploy factory closed this week, statistics confirmed that two thirds of former Remploy workers whose factories closed last year have either still not found work or did find work then lost it. Thus 1,326 disabled people are now in the unemployment 'ghetto' instead."

My cousin's experience confirms this article's sentiments.

Given these outcomes, are you now able to review the statement in your letter of 13th March 2012 when you said: "I don't believe it is right to continue with the segregated model of employment for disabled people. I think that disabled people should have the same job opportunities as everybody else and that they should not be excluded from mainstream employment by being kept in Government run, loss-making factories. Personalised support, which is primarily delivered through the scheme 'Access to Work', is very effective at helping disabled people get into work. Remploy staff affected by the changes will be guaranteed an £8m package of tailored support for up to 18 months to help with the transition. Half of this is available for personal budgets equating to an award of £2,500 per person and people will also be able to speak to a personal case worker with one-on-one sessions as well as accessing back-to-work support."

The £3.3m (£2,500 x 1,326) thus spent on the 1,326 people still unemployed has clearly gone up in smoke along with their employment prospects. The de facto situation is that without the support of such establishments as Remploy and Ludon, disabled people stand little chance of employment in a competitive market place. Government policy has failed these people by denying them: 1. an opportunity to do useful work and 2. a social outlet rarely available to the isolated disabled.

It seems that the Government would rather pay unemployment and other benefits than support what were, successful (for the disabled) enterprises.

I have copied this to Mike Penning, the Minister of State for Disabled People.

Sincerely

Paul Turner