



# Employment of people with disabilities in the UK

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# Introduction

Social Firms UK established in 1999 to:

- Raise awareness of the social firm model
- Provide technical support to social enterprises and social firms employing people with disabilities and other major barriers to labour market integration
- Lobby on their behalf

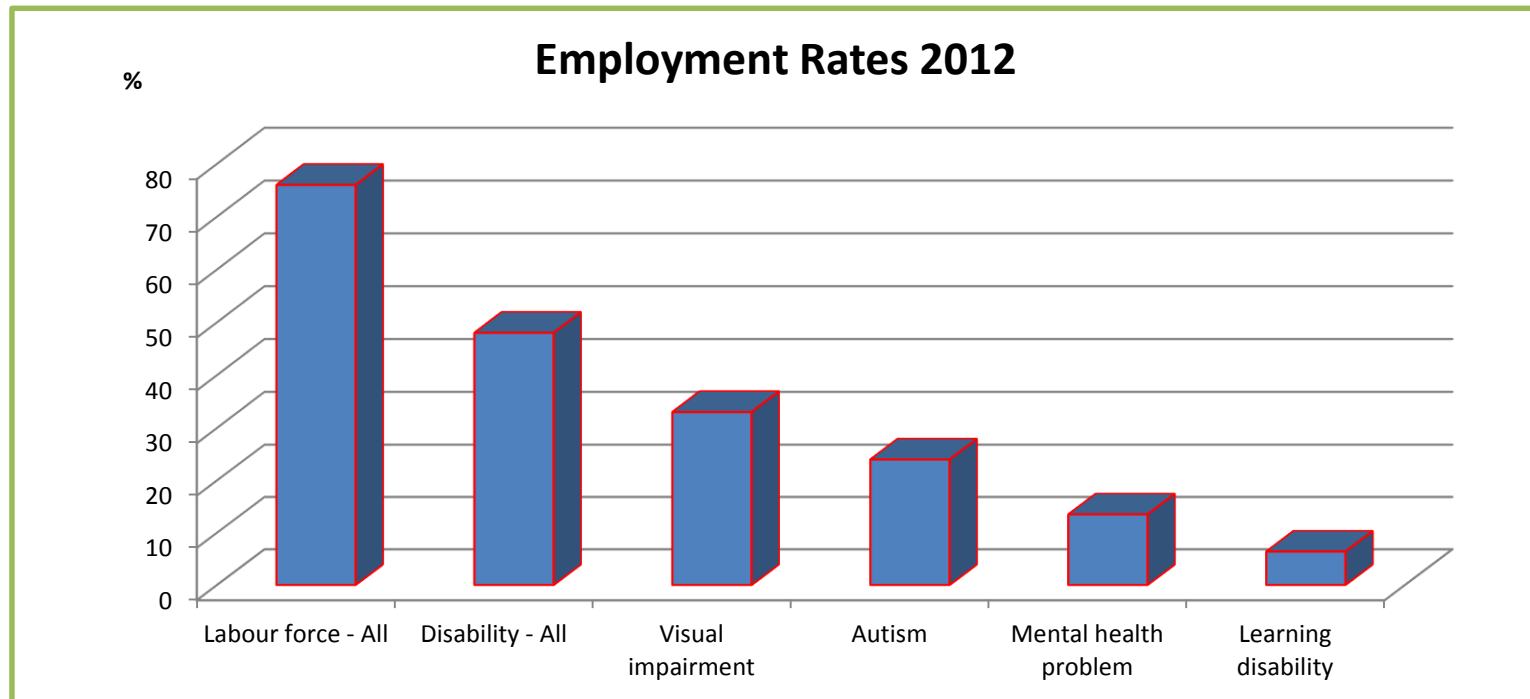
## History of key UK legislation

- From 1940s to 1990s UK had a quota system.
  - 3% of company workforce should be disabled people
  - Not strictly enforced and didn't work
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
  - Significant step forward
  - **Equalisation** of opportunities for disabled people
  - **Duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments** to accommodate needs of people with disabilities
  - Became model of EU legislation in 2000.

### Equality Act 2010

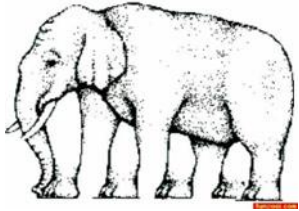
- Discrimination against disabled people brought within overarching law banning unfair treatment due to age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment
- covers employment and the provision of services

# Employment and disabled people in the UK



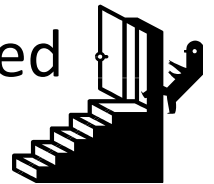
Growth of social firm model in UK due to frustration about lack of opportunities for disabled people.

# Barriers to employment for disabled people



Focus on disability rather than ability

Misconceptions about type and cost of adjustments needed



Stigma



Uncertainty about financial support for individuals e.g. benefits

Lack of financial support for employers e.g. subsidies



# State Actors

National Government

Mental  
Health Trusts

Local  
government

Jobcentres

Local Doctors

# Civil Society Actors

Charities

Social  
Enterprises and  
Social Firms

Mainstream  
employers

# Research

Demonstrates value of social firm model for

- Mental health recovery (University of Warwick)

[www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/13/270](http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/13/270)

- Reducing offending (case studies)



# Examples of social firms

- **NMC Design and Print** : graphic design company 15 employees of which 12 have muscular dystrophy.  
[www.nmccentre.com/nmc/design-print](http://www.nmccentre.com/nmc/design-print)
- **Catering2Order**: contract caterers led by and employing people with visual impairments.
- **Argonaut Community Services**: facilities management company employing people with hearing impairments and other disabilities. [www.argonautenterprises.co.uk](http://www.argonautenterprises.co.uk)
- **Frame of Mind**: picture framing business employing people with mental health problems. [www.frameofmind.uk.com](http://www.frameofmind.uk.com)
- **The Friendly Information Company** : run by and for people with learning disabilities; mental health problems and other disabilities. Makes information accessible through “Easyread” leaflets and posters; films and websites.  
[www.friendlyinformation.org.uk](http://www.friendlyinformation.org.uk)



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