



Centre for Research in  
Education Inclusion  
and Diversity



# Understanding Disability in the Workplace

Sheila Riddell, Centre for Research in Education  
Inclusion and Diversity, University of Edinburgh



# Overview: Focus of presentation

---

- Current Government policies and support
- Education and employment outcomes of disabled people and implications for future life chances
- How can IS staff support colleagues?



# Disabled people: policy context

---

- GB equality legislation prohibits discrimination against people with protected characteristics, which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation – but not social class.
- People may have more than one protected characteristic.
- Discrimination defined in Equality Act 2010 as (i) providing less favourable treatment for reason associated with disability & (ii) failing to make reasonable adjustments. These include various adaptations and forms of support – particular applicable to big organisations such as UoE.



# Disabled people: wider context

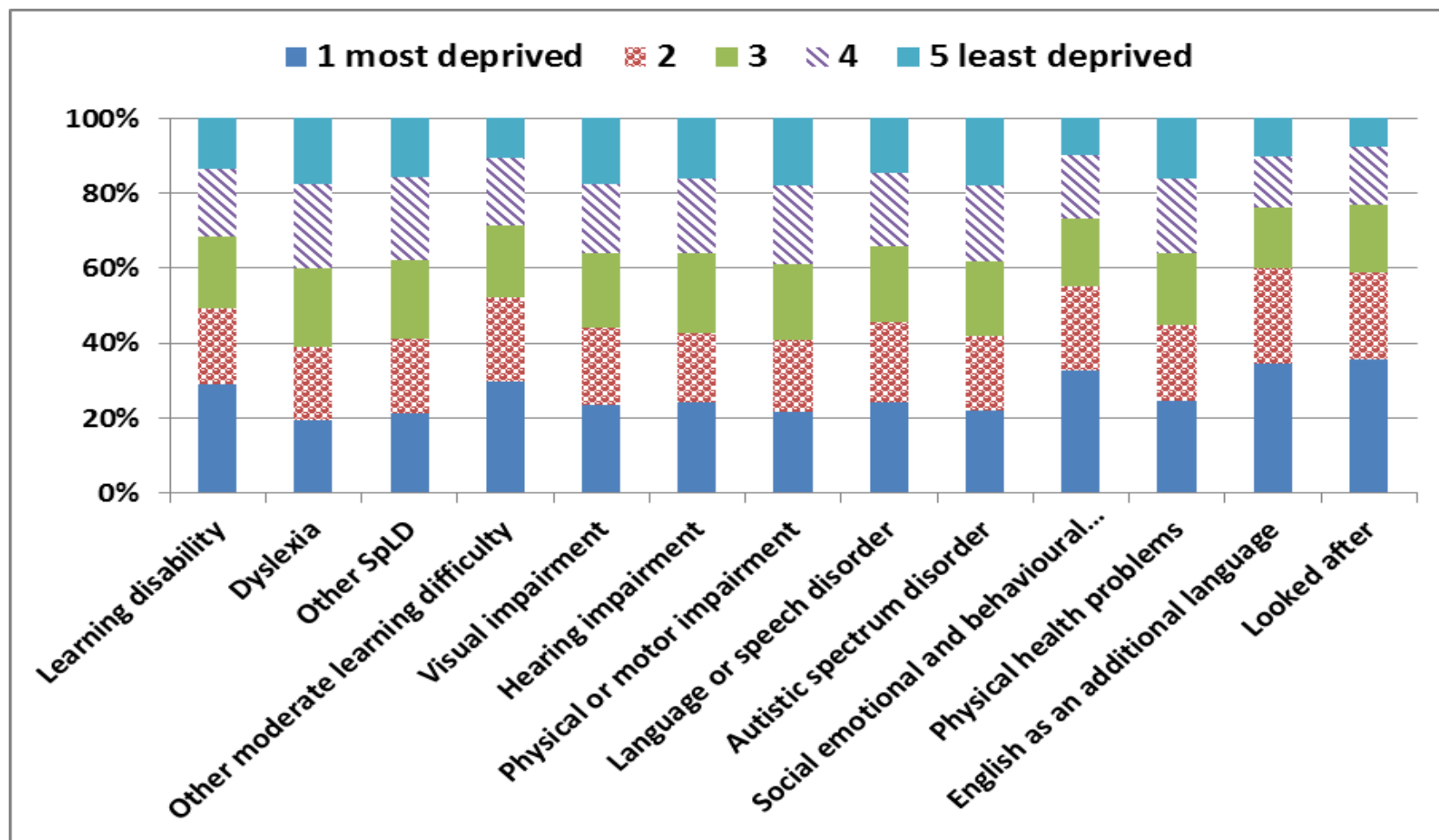
- Impact of welfare reform and austerity - negative effect on disabled people
- Employment and Support Allowance available to people with high levels of impairment. Involves medical assessment – attracted negative publicity. Work Choice meant to help people into work – but criticised because it does not support those with most significant impairments.
- Access to Work – benefit available to those in work to sustain employment. £108 million in 2013-14, Can be used to pay for transport, sign language interpretation, physical adaptations, personal assistance etc. Has now been capped at £40,800 per person. Employers expected to meet additional costs.
- Growing inequality – knowledge economy leads to ‘skill-biased technological growth’ – workers with higher level skills are doing well, others much less so.

# Disabled people in education and employment - some statistics



- Recent increase in number of pupils identified as having some form of ASN (now 20% of pupil population). But only 4% of these would be counted as disabled.
- Greatest increase is among those with invisible impairments, particularly social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Also dyslexia and mental health difficulties.
- About 12% of adults have a condition that has an enduring and adverse effect on ability to perform normal day to day activities. Most common conditions of disabled benefits claimants are anxiety & depression & musculo-skeletal difficulties.
- Disability increases with age –almost all over 80s have some degree of impairment.

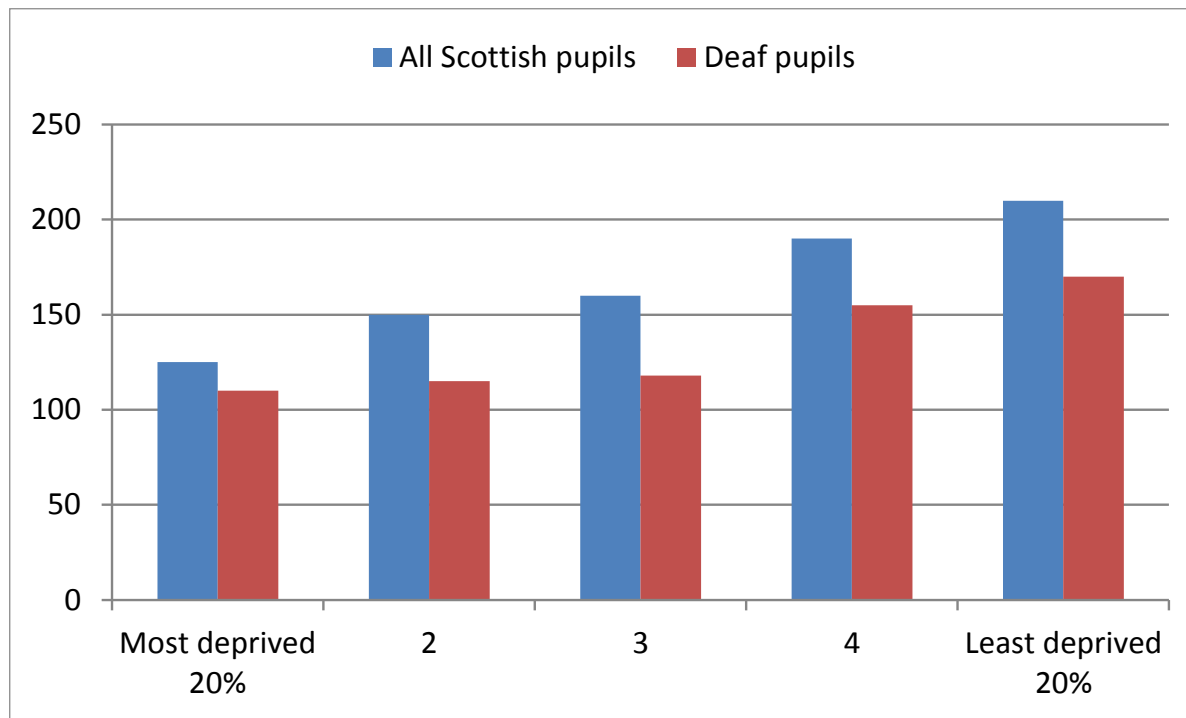
# At school, certain categories associated strongly with social deprivation – particularly SEBD (the most stigmatising)



# Strong association between social deprivation and educational attainment – similar pattern for deaf pupils whose overall attainment is lower



Figure 2 Mean tariff scores of deaf pupils and general pupil population at the end of lower secondary by SIMD



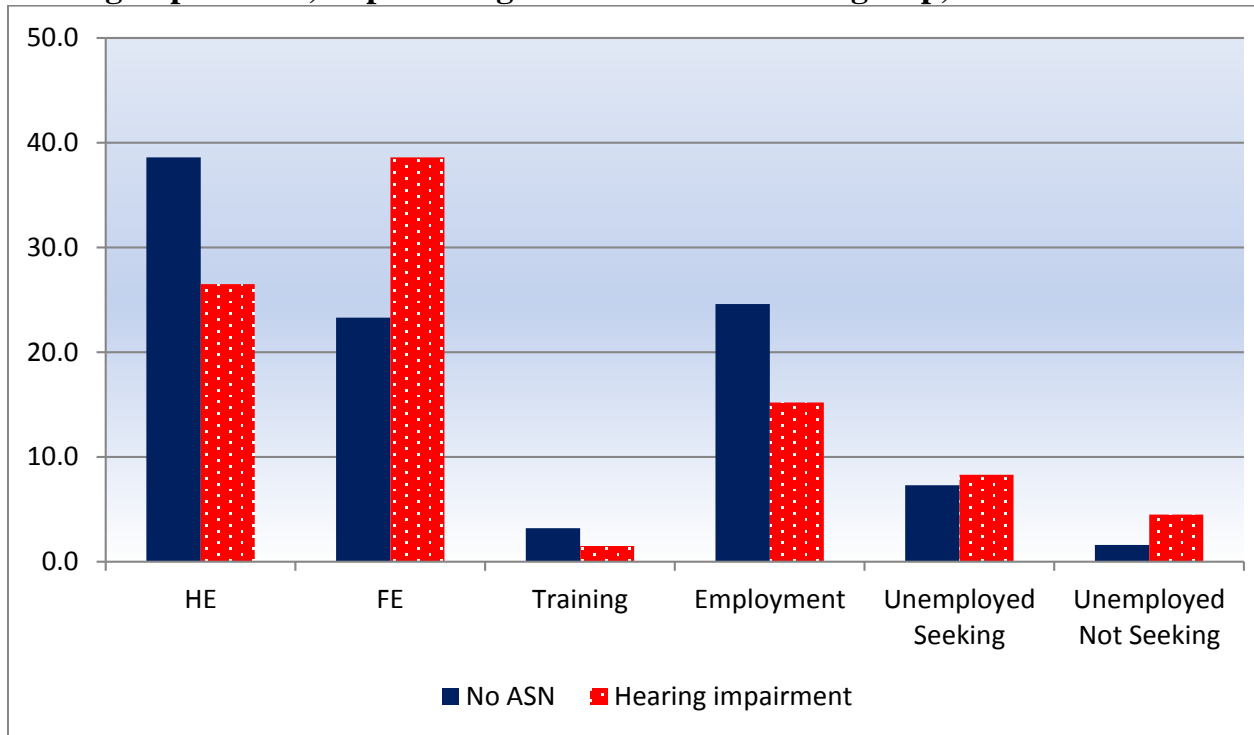
Source. *Arendt et al., 2013.*

1. *SIMD quintile ranking is used as an indicator of socio-economic status.*
2. *Mean tariff scores are based on weighted averages between 2004 and 2010.*

# Post-school destinations reflect prior attainment – and social class differences. Comparison of deaf and hearing pupils.



**Figure 3: Destinations of Scottish school leavers with no support needs and leavers with hearing impairment, as percentage of all leavers in each group, 2011/12**



SOURCE: ATTAINMENT AND LEAVER DESTINATIONS, SUPPLEMENTARY DATA. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (2013)

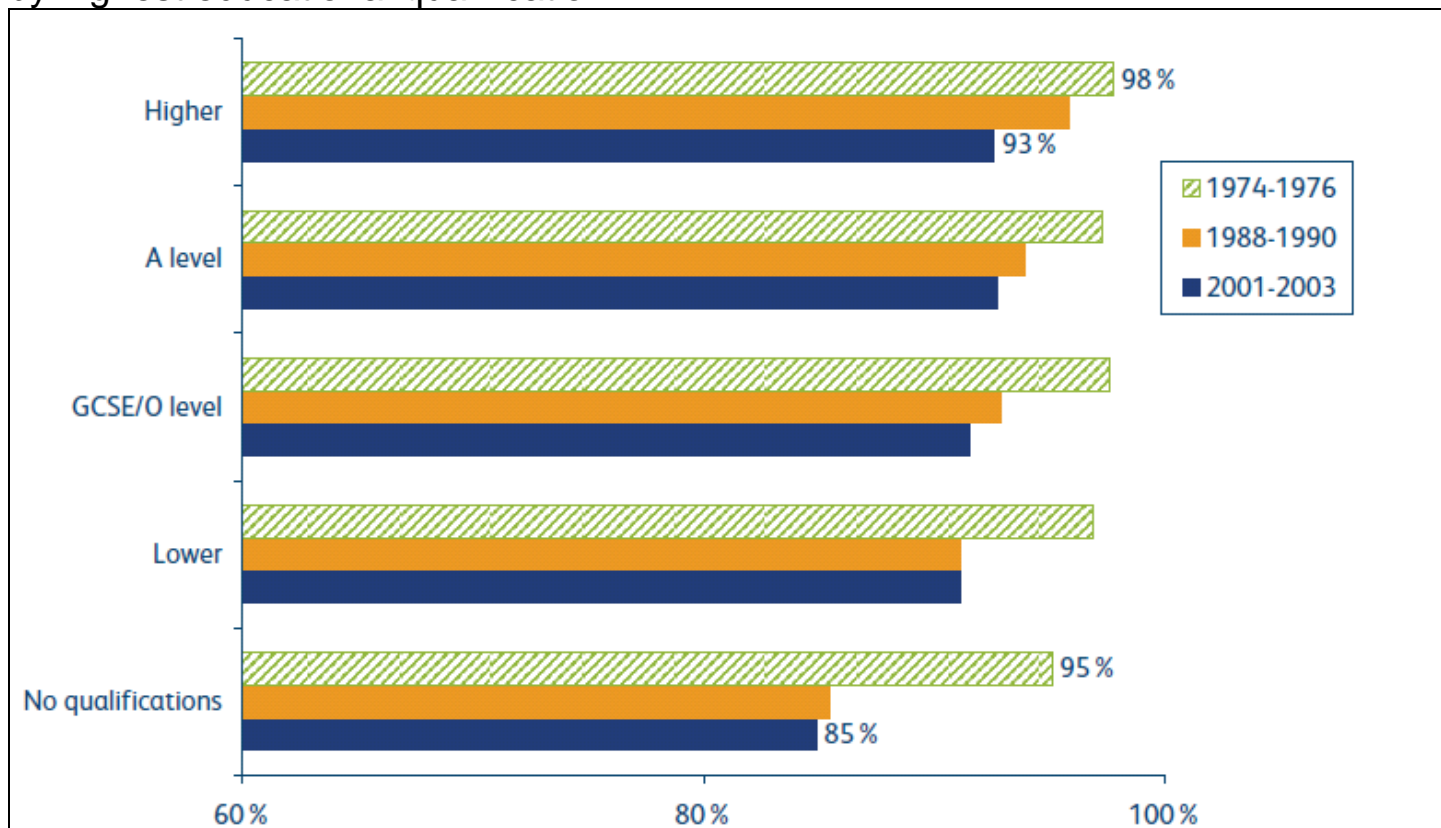
1. Where data are not disclosed due to low numbers (below 5) we have allowed for two pupils in order to show that some pupils achieved qualifications at a particular level.
2. There were no hearing-impaired school leavers in Activity Agreements and Voluntary Work, and these categories were not included in the figure.
3. Because of undisclosed figures and rounding up of percentages, numbers may not add up to 100%.



# Growing association between employment rate and level of education



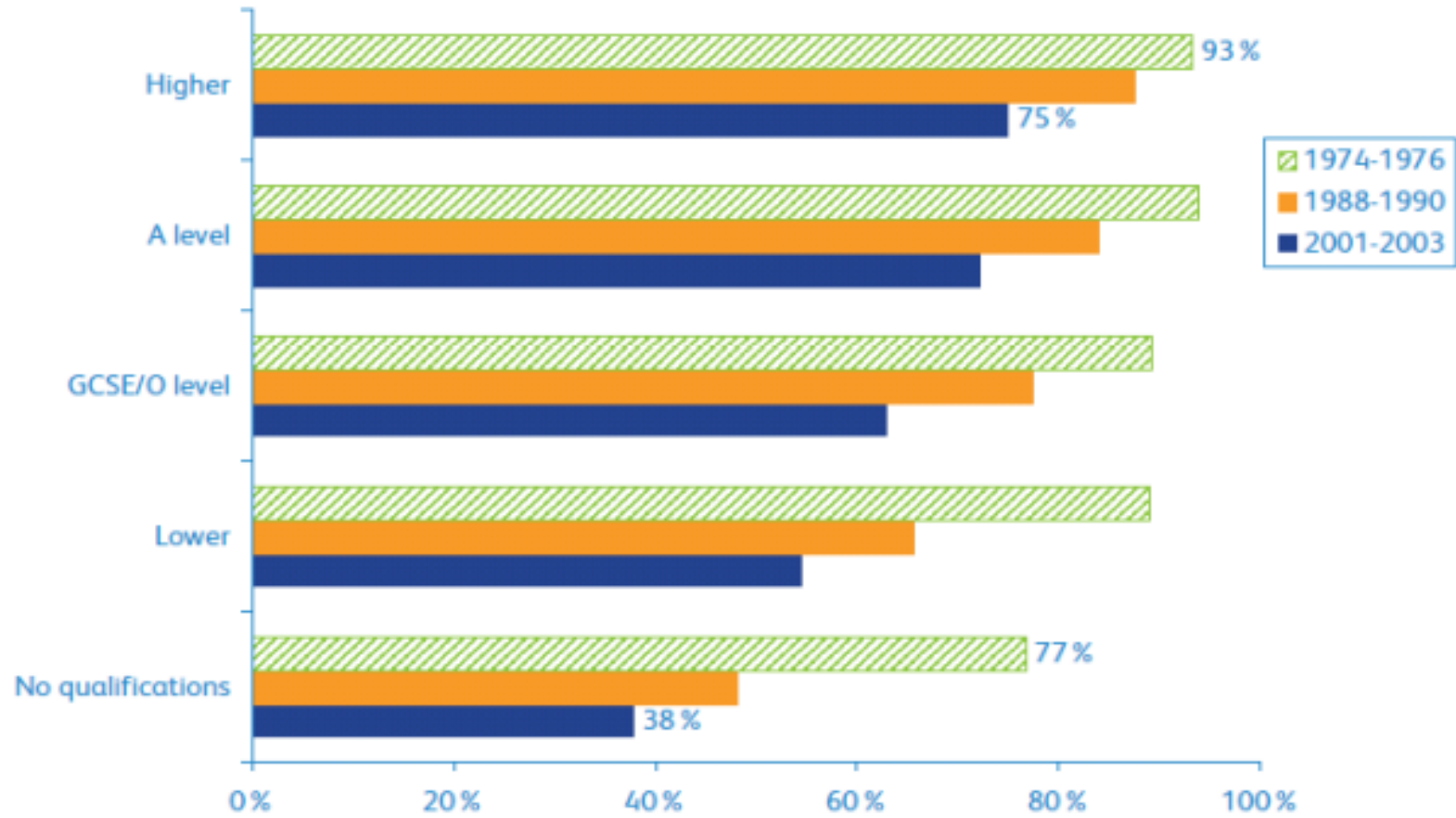
Figure 24: Proportion of men without limiting long standing illness who are in work, by highest educational qualification



Source: National Equality Panel, 2010

# Low qualifications have particularly adverse effect on employment rates of disabled people

in 1970s, 75% of disabled people with no qualifications were employed, c.f. 38% in early 2000s



# Graduate labour market – only small differences between disabled & non-disabled population



**Figure 5: Destinations of D/HH graduates, compared to disabled and non-disabled graduates, as percentage of all graduates in each group, 2009/10**



*SOURCE: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? AGCAS DISABILITY TASK GROUP (2012)*

# Summary of research findings on labour market experiences of disabled people with different levels of education



## Barriers to finding and staying in employment

Graduates	People with lower qualifications
Lack of accessibility in applying for work	
Discrimination in recruitment practices	
Lack of deaf awareness	
	Lack of work experience
	Limited social networks
	Lack of support in employment



# The University of Edinburgh

- **Equality & diversity issues, including disability, taken seriously.**
- **As required by law, University gathers statistics on staff and students & produces annual reports & action plans.**
- **Total staff (ft & pt) July 2016: 10,555**
- **Academic: 4,285; Professional services: 6,255**
- **Staff reporting a disability 2010-11: 1.9% (202); 2016-17: 2.9% (394)**



## Low proportion compared with general population – Why?

- People with high levels of education & in employment less likely to be disabled – but offset by age profile.
- By way of contrast, almost 10% of students disclose a disability, majority of whom have dyslexia.
- When students enter employment, they often decide not to disclose disability because risks outweigh benefits – e.g. only 1% of Scottish teaching force discloses a disability.
- Disability continues to be highly stigmatised, particularly mental health difficulties.



## What can colleagues in IS do? A few suggestions:

---

- Paradox: work is source of great pleasure in people's lives, but also source of anxiety and pain. Many people develop a disability while in employment. Important to:
- Avoid discrimination in recruitment
- Ensure that physical and IT environments are fully accessible.
- Create warm and supportive working environment. Strong social networks vital in supporting employees' mental health.
- Destigmatise disability, particularly mental health difficulties.

# Thank you for listening!



Over to you: As an employer, do you think the University is supportive of disabled people?  
What more could and should be done?

Further information about the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity can be found at: [www.creid.ed.ac.uk](http://www.creid.ed.ac.uk)