

Evaluation of the Adjustments Passport Pilot

Research report

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Executive summary

Background

Access to higher education and participation rates show that significantly fewer pupils with special educational needs (SEN) had started higher education by age 19 compared to those without SEN. Disabled graduates are also less likely to be in highly skilled employment or higher-level study than those with no known disability.

Disabled people are thus still disadvantaged on entry to university and on its exit. As the transition from School to university and from university to a place of work, due to the complexity and length of the process of setting reasonable adjustments, is somewhat challenging, it is reasonable to assume that this forms part of the problem.

While the UK Government provides significant support to disabled people, including financial support, the process of application is cumbersome by nature and in many cases lengthy. Additionally, having to repeat this at different stages in life becomes another barrier to the disabled person, as it is sometimes psychologically difficult to keep doing it.

To increase the efficacy of the disability support, both provided by the government and provided by HE providers, the Disabled Students' Commission (DSC) was established in March 2020. On recognising that disabled graduates are less successful in finding employment the DSC advised the Government on the design and development of a new 'passport' to better support disabled graduates into employment.

As a whole, the Adjustments Passport aims to support and empower the disabled student by using it as a communication tool to enable the student to have a more structured and confident conversation about their disability and the adjustments they need with employers.

When fully implemented the Adjustments Passport would provide the living link between SEND, DSA and Access to Work and serve the disabled person throughout their life.

The Adjustments Passport will also support potential employers by documenting the in-work support the student requires and raising awareness of what support they can potentially receive through Access to Work.

Aims and objectives

The Adjustments Passport Evaluation aimed to determine the level of potential effectiveness of the Adjustments Passport committed to in Government's National Disability Strategy. In particular, the project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Adjustments Passport during its phase of completion and early use with employers, aiming to meet the following objectives:

- Assess how disabled students perceived the usefulness and ease of use of the Adjustments Passport.
- Understand the experience of disabled students in completing the Adjustments Passport, its suitability, impact on self-confidence in having disability/adjustment needs conversations, impact on finding/maintaining work, and impact on in-work support and the Access to Work application process.
- Understand the experience of disability practitioners experiences of helping students complete the Adjustments Passport; its suitability/usability; impact on supporting conversations with students about their disability/adjustments needs; impact on their capacity to support students finding/apply for work; impact on the visibility of in-work support available to students; impact on their capacity to support students with the Access to Work application process; and impact on current assessment and data-gathering processes.
- Understand employer's perceptions and feelings towards the Adjustments Passport; its impact on their ability to recruit/support disabled individuals; impact on supporting conversations with individuals about their disability/adjustments needs; impact on the provision of in-work support; impact on current assessment processes for in-work adjustments; and support and impact on their awareness and capacity to support individuals with the Access to Work application process.

Methodology

A mixed-method design was used for the evaluation involving quantitative and qualitative data collection, and a final synthesis of the data. There were two stages to data collection:

1. **Online Surveys** with disabled final year undergraduate and postgraduate students at two universities to understand their perceptions regarding the usefulness of the Adjustments Passport, ease of use of the Adjustments Passport and appropriateness of the Adjustments Passport's design.
2. **Focus groups** were used to build upon the data gathered from the survey study completed by students in stage one. In this second phase, qualitative focus group interviews were used to explore in greater detail the perceptions and understandings of the Adjustments Passport of three important stakeholder groups: disabled final year university students, disability support practitioners and a range of graduate employers in the public and private sector. The focus group interviews enabled the gathering of a wide range of viewpoints to provide a stronger context, meaning and insight into each group's unique perspective, which was used to better understand how the Adjustments Passport document can meet the employment support needs of disabled students in higher education.

Key findings

The quantitative findings indicated that there was general agreement that the Adjustments Passport would have a positive impact for the participants in being able to gain reasonable adjustments.

Participants agreed that the Adjustments Passport would be a useful transferable tool in providing a record of adjustments and would reduce the need for future assessments.

A majority of participants agreed that the Adjustments Passport would also make it easier for them to receive the reasonable adjustment support they required as they moved into employment and were confident that reasonable adjustments could be put in place to support them.

The Adjustments Passport was also seen as a useful tool in having adjustment-based conversation. It also raised participants' awareness of the Access to Work scheme and the support it offers.

There was strong support for an earlier introduction of the Adjustments Passport, before reaching higher education.

Participants did indicate that there was room for improvement in terms of how accessible and easy to complete the Adjustments Passport although many agreed that they would be able to complete or amend the Adjustments Passport independently in the future.

The Adjustments Passport led to participants feeling significantly more confident in their ability to discuss adjustments with employers.

Demographic analysis revealed no differences in responses to the survey.

The qualitative findings build upon the quantitative findings and provide further support of the passport's strong potential utility to support disabled students transition from higher education into work from the perspectives of all stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder groups felt that the passport would: (i) help to tackle current stigma and negative opinions around disability (ii) help to provide some legitimacy to the students' disability or condition, thereby helping to alleviate any perceived pressure to justify or prove a disability / condition was real or genuine (iii) increase students' confidence to initiate open and transparent disability/adjustment needs conversations with employers (iv) facilitate and accelerate the in-work adjustments process, and (v) reduce the time-consuming and often cumbersome requirement for current assessments and data-gathering processes.

All stakeholders could also clearly envisage the passports' potential utility of continuing to support students throughout their careers.

Recommendations

All stakeholder groups approved of the passport's focus on adjustments rather than on disability. The Adjustments Passport was seen as an efficient time-saving document that would facilitate the recruitment and adjustments process and increase knowledge and access to the Access to Work scheme.

However, a number of recommendations are suggested to enhance the inclusivity of the Adjustments Passport as well as its utility. These focus on terminology and language used, aspects of the Adjustments Passport design, guidance and support for stakeholders, clarity of purpose and scope of the Adjustments Passport, and clarity on usage and transferability of the Adjustments Passport.

Terminology and language:

- Alternative names for the Adjustments Passport are proposed to better capture its purpose and aims.
- Care should be taken over the use of the term "disability" within the Adjustments Passport to avoid discouraging its use by those who do not self-identify as disabled.
- Simplification of terminology and language in sections to accommodate users for whom English is not their first language (including deaf students).

Adjustments Passport design:

- Consideration should be given to design of Adjustments Passport to better accommodate users with visual impairments or learning difficulties.
- Formatting to be accessible and with inclusive features.
- Expansion of options available to better identify and accommodate different conditions and adjustments.
- Giving signposting to further help and support a more prominent position on the Adjustments Passport.

Guidance and support for stakeholders:

- Consider creation of guidance documents and support resources in relation to completion of the Adjustments Passport for students.
- Consider creation of guidance documents, support resources, and CPD training in relation to the implications of adjustments and implementation of these for employers.

Purpose and scope of the Adjustments Passport:

- Further effort is required to build knowledge and understanding of the Access to Work scheme and how it operates in conjunction with the Adjustments Passport.

Usage and transferability of the Adjustments Passport:

- Earlier implementation of an Adjustments Passport during school years was seen to be beneficial.
- Greater transferability of an Adjustments Passport across schemes and employers.
- Consideration of an Adjustments Passport for individuals following alternative pathways other than Further/Higher Education.

Findings represent the perspectives of students, employers, and support staff's perceptions of the usefulness of the passport. It is also important to consider a longitudinal review of usage of the passport to ensure its usefulness and applicability.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Disabled students, the scope of the task

The Department for Education, in its June 2022 report on pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), stated that ‘The number of pupils with special educational needs increased to 1.49 million pupils in 2022, representing 16.5% of all pupils. The proportion of pupils with SEN had been decreasing since 2010 (21.1%), however it has increased for the last 5 years.’¹

Furthermore, the Local Government Association, in its Spending Review 2021, reported that ‘over 430,000 children and young people have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in England as of January 2021, an increase of 11 per cent or 60,000 over the previous 12 months alone’ and ‘the number of children and young people with an EHCP has increased in every year since the Children and Families Act became law in 2014 and prior to that, as far back as 2010’². This indicates that the number of students with disabilities is also likely to be increasing, together with the associated need for additional support.

Indeed, as expected, the number of disabled students in UK Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) has been increasing over the past few years. A Briefing Paper for the House of Commons reported that ‘in 2019/20 332,000 home students in the UK said they had a disability of some kind. This was 17.3% of home students. The number with a known disability has increased by 106,000 or 47% since 2014/15. The proportion of home students with a disability increased from 13.1% in 2014/15.’³

¹ Department for Education (June 2022), Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources. p.6

² Local Government Association. Spending Review 2021 Submission. [online] Available at: <<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/spending-review-2021-submission#priority-5-education-and-childrens-social-care>> [Accessed 07 Sept 2022]

³ Support for disabled students in higher education in England. House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number 8716, 22 February 2021, p. 5

However, access to higher education and participation rates show that 'In 2018/19 an estimated 17.8% of pupils with identified SEN at age 15 had started higher education by age 19 compared to 47.3% of those without SEN.'⁴

This is further supported by data from the Department for Education, which states that 'In 2019/20, 8.4% of pupils with an EHC plan progressed to HE by age 19, compared to 20.8% of pupils with SEN support and 47.5% for pupils with no identified SEN.'⁵ Clearly, the transition to university proves more challenging to disabled people.

Additionally, disabled graduates were also less likely to be in highly skilled employment or higher-level study and '53% of those with a known disability were in full-time work compared with 62% of those with no known disability.'⁶

This is also confirmed by AGCAS who have recently reported that 'At all qualification levels, the proportion of disabled graduates in full time employment was lower than the proportion of non-disabled graduates in full time employment.' and 'Higher proportions of disabled graduates at all qualification levels were unemployed than non-disabled graduates.'⁷

The above data demonstrates that disabled people are still disadvantaged on entry to university and on its exit. As the transition from School to university and from university to a place of work, due to the complexity and length of the process of setting reasonable adjustments, is somewhat challenging, it is reasonable to assume that this forms part of the problem.

⁴ Support for disabled students in higher education in England. House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number 8716, 22 February 2021, p. 7

⁵ Department for Education (June 2022). Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources. p.13

⁶ Support for disabled students in higher education in England. House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number 8716, 22 February 2021, p. 9

⁷ AGCAS. What happens next? 2021: A report on the outcomes of 2018 disabled graduates. p.12

Disability support provided by the UK Government

The UK Government provides significant support to disabled people, including financial support. This is largely achieved through three different schemes that provide financial support to disabled people at different stages in their lives.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Scheme⁸ provides support to disabled children while they attend School.

The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Scheme⁹ provides financial support to disabled students during their studies at university. Currently, a disabled student can receive up to £25,575¹⁰ per academic year in support. In 2019/20 academic year '60,600 full-time undergraduate students from England received DSA'.¹¹

The Access to Work Scheme¹² provides financial support to disabled people at their workplace. Currently, a disabled person can receive up to £65,180¹³ per annum.

All these schemes require the disabled person to apply for the support they need and supply evidence about their disability and how it affects their ability to learn and work. The process of application is cumbersome by nature and in many cases lengthy. Additionally, having to repeat all that at different stages in life becomes another barrier to the disabled person, as it is sometimes psychologically difficult to keep doing it.

Disabled Students' Commission

To increase the efficacy of the disability support, both provided by the government and provided by HE providers, the Disabled Students' Commission (DSC) was established in March 2020. The Commission is funded by the Office for Students and supported by Advance HE. The DSC is constituted as an independent and strategic group with a key

⁸ See: <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs>

⁹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>

¹⁰ As above

¹¹ Support for disabled students in higher education in England. House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number 8716, 22 February 2021, p. 17

¹² See: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

¹³ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers/access-to-work-factsheet-for-employers#how-much-will-this-cost-me>

priority to advise, inform and influence English Higher Education Providers (HEPs) and sector bodies to improve support for disabled students. Its aim is to help the sector achieve more positive outcomes for disabled students in relation to access, participation, success, and progression.¹⁴

In its short existence, the DSC has managed to issue advice and guidance to HEIs on a variety of issues that enhance the disabled students' experience. These have already made a significant and positive impact within the HE sector. Specifically, recognising that disabled graduates are less successful in finding employment, 'the DSC has advised on the design and development of a new government 'passport' to support disabled graduates into employment'.¹⁵

The idea behind the new tool is to aid disabled graduates by reducing the need to repeat information about their disability and what impact that disability has on them in regard of study and work. It also aims to aid prospective employers by providing them with information about the reasonable adjustments offered to disabled students while at university and raising awareness of the Access to Work scheme.

Disability support provided at Higher Education Institution (HEI) level

At university level, the process of setting up support for disabled students is complex and takes up considerable time and effort to complete. This then needs to be monitored and, if necessary, updated to reflect the changes in circumstances for disabled students. This can be split in the following stages: transition to university; setting up the necessary reasonable adjustments; help and support to eligible students to apply and make use of the DSA funded support; monitoring the implementation of the reasonable adjustments throughout the students' time in university; and finally, preparation for transitioning to the world of work.

¹⁴ Disabled Students' Commission. Disabled Students' Commission Annual Report 2021-2022. p.5

¹⁵ Disabled Students' Commission. Disabled Students' Commission Annual Report 2021-2022. p.15

At the initial stage, transition to university, disabled people who have been offered conditional or unconditional place at the university are invited to discuss their needs with disability practitioners. New students are advised what proof of their disability they need to provide to the university, the DSA central team or to both. As students are invited to declare whether they have a disability when they apply for university (usually through UCAS), the university is aware how many disabled people are about to enrol and can see whether all who have declared a disability have also registered with the institution's disability service. Evidence shows that about a third of all those who have declared a disability on UCAS do not register with the university's disability service¹⁶. Although it is unclear how many have not done so, because of the process in place, it is safe to assume that the number is high.

The stage of setting up reasonable adjustments needs to be completed promptly as these adjustments aid the new student in their learning. As proof for the specific disability, and a discussion (informal assessment) about the support needs of the student are needed, it takes time for all disabled students to get their reasonable adjustments in place. Additionally, it is psychologically difficult for the disabled student to repeat what they have already shared with disability practitioners prior to joining the university. As a result, the beginning of studies may not be a very smooth process and the student experience may be negatively affected.

Applying for DSA funded support is also time consuming and bureaucratic in nature. Students who are eligible for such support need to undertake and then submit a DSA Needs Assessment Report (NAR). The NAR is done by qualified assessors, usually working at DSA Assessment Centres. This assessment, to a large extent, repeats earlier assessments done at School or College level. Additionally, even with support from the university's disability service, for students with specific disabilities (such as visual impairment, mobility issues, disabled on mental health ground with anxiety, etc.) this may prove even more challenging and deterring. It is not uncommon for DSA funded support to be finalised and put in place months after the student started their studies, which again negatively affects their student experience.

¹⁶ Students with disabilities. Business Objects Report April 2022. University of Wolverhampton.

If the disabled student experiences a change in their health or/and condition, some of the above steps need to be taken again in order to update the set of reasonable adjustments and the support put in place.

Importantly, in supporting disabled students to prepare for the world of work, the level of awareness about the Access to Work Scheme needs to be addressed, as it is vital for the continuation of support post university. Yet, it is always a challenge to reach out and engage with all disabled students who are about to graduate. Indeed, as a qualitative research with applicants and employers on how well are the Access to Work's processes working has uncovered, both applicants and employers stated that they 'had limited understanding of AtW' and they 'called for more information and clarity on what to expect from the process from application to reimbursement and expected timelines'.¹⁷

Employment outcomes for graduates with and without disability

The data in Tables 1 – 3 is for 2019/20 graduates of the University of Wolverhampton who were UK domiciled at the time of the Graduate Outcomes Survey. Data run from HEIDI Plus on 03/08/2022. Table 4 presents the data from King's College, London.

Table 1 confirms that disabled graduates are less successful in acquiring skilled employment within 15 months from graduation. For highly skilled jobs, the gap is 13% and 15% accordingly for female and male graduates with undergraduate degrees. The corresponding gap for female graduates with postgraduate degrees is higher, at 19%.

Graduates with either undergraduate or postgraduate degrees who have a disability are more likely to be in low skilled jobs or not in work. For female graduates with undergraduate degrees the negative gap is 2% and 8% for 'low skilled' and 'not in work' accordingly. For male graduates with undergraduate degrees the negative gap is 11% for 'not in work'

¹⁷ Lorna Adams, Angus Tindle, Christabel Downing, Naomi Morrice and Manuel Domingos (IFF Research) 2018. Department for Work and Pensions. Access to Work: Qualitative research with applicants, employers and delivery staff. p.5

category. Only for 'low skilled' jobs, graduates with disability overtake those with no known disability and this is only by 1%.

Table 1: Employment outcomes, GOS 2019-20, University of Wolverhampton

Student Demographics			Skilled Employment Marker			
			High Skilled	Medium Skilled	Low Skilled	Not in Work
Undergraduate	Known to have a disability	Female	45%	17%	11%	26%
		Male	39%	15%	16%	30%
	No known disability/	Female	58%	15%	9%	18%
		Male	54%	10%	17%	19%
Postgraduate	Known to have a disability	Female	64%	15%	3%	17%
		Male	-			
	No known disability	Female	83%	6%	1%	10%
		Male	76%	6%	6%	11%

Source: Data based on graduate's answers to employment questions. As per HESA/OFS definitions, this can include voluntary/unpaid work. This table ignores the graduate's answer to the question of "Most important Activity". Data adapted from HESA analysis tool. Empty cells due to small sample sizes.

When 'further study' category is also added to the 'highly skilled' category, the picture for disabled graduates remains the same. These graduates still lag behind those with no disability, though on a slightly smaller scale for those with undergraduate degrees, 9% and 10% for female and male graduates accordingly. For female graduates with postgraduate degrees the gap increases to 21%.

Table 2: Percentage of graduates who are in either highly skilled work or further study, GOS 2019-20, University of Wolverhampton

Level of Qualification Gained	Disability (Basic)	Gender	In high skilled work or studying	Not in high skilled work or studying
Undergraduate	Known to have a disability	Female	40%	60%
	No known disability/Unknown	Male	44%	56%
	Known to have a disability	Female	31%	69%
	No known disability/Unknown	Male	34%	66%
Postgraduate	Known to have a disability	Female	33%	67%
	No known disability/Unknown	Male	-	-
	Known to have a disability	Female	12%	88%
	No known disability/Unknown	Male	20%	80%

Note: Table shows the percentage of graduates who are either in highly skilled work or studying. Graduates with missing SOC code are excluded here unless they are in further study (in which case are included as positive outcome). Empty cells due to missing data.

Tables 3 and 4 breaks down the data shown in Tables 1 and 2 by specific activity. It does not change the picture, just adds more nuance to it. It is interesting to notice that graduates with disabilities are more successful in obtaining part time employment but far less successful in obtaining full time employment compared to those without a disability. They are also more likely to be unemployed within 15 months of graduation. Both female and male disabled graduates with undergraduate degrees tend to seek further study, be that full time or part time, to avoid being unemployed.

**Table 3a: HESA Activity Outcome, GOS 2019-20, University of Wolverhampton
(Undergraduates)**

Activity	Students known to have a disability		Students with no known disability	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Full-time employment	48%	46%	55%	56%
Part-time employment	12%	17%	12%	15%
Unknown pattern of employment	1%	0%	1%	0%
Employment and further study	6%	8%	10%	9%
Voluntary or unpaid work	1%	1%	2%	0%
Full-time further study	11%	7%	8%	5%
Part-time further study	1%	2%	0%	1%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	6%	9%	3%	6%
Unemployed and due to start further study	1%	0%	0%	1%
Unemployed and due to start work	2%	3%	1%	1%
Unemployment	12%	7%	8%	6%

Source: HESA's "Activity" measure. It is the first chart HESA include in their "Summary Statistics", and is derived from a number of different responses the graduate gives. It is somewhat dependant on the graduates answering the question – which of their activities is "most important".

**Table 3b: HESA Activity Outcome, GOS 2019-20, University of Wolverhampton
(Postgraduates)**

Activity	Students known to have a disability		Students with no known disability	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Full-time employment	-	53%	68%	64%
Part-time employment	-	17%	10%	12%
Employment and further study	-	10%	8%	10%
Full-time further study	-	-	2%	3%
Part-time further study	-	2%	<1%	<1%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	-	8%	6%	6%
Unemployment	-	10%	4%	3%

Note: empty cells due to missing data.

**Table 4a: HESA Activity Outcome, GOS 2019-20, King's College, London
(Undergraduate)**

Activity	Students known to have a disability	Students with no known disability
Full-time employment	55%	49%
Part-time employment	8%	6%
Unknown pattern of employment	1%	<1%
Employment and further study	12%	12%
Voluntary or unpaid work	2%	1%
Full-time further study	13%	19%
Part-time further study	<1%	<1%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	<1%	5%
Unemployed and due to start work	6%	2%
Unemployment	2%	4%

Table 4b: HESA Activity Outcome, GOS 2019-20, King's College, London (Postgraduate)

Activity	Students known to have a disability	Students with no known disability
Full-time employment	64%	52%
Part-time employment	9%	7%
Unknown pattern of employment	0%	<1%
Employment and further study	10%	11%
Voluntary or unpaid work	3%	1%
Full-time further study	11%	7%
Part-time further study	<1%	<1%
Other including travel, caring for someone or retired	6%	4%
Unemployed and due to start work	<1%	<1%
Unemployment	8%	4%

Although it may be too big of a task to aim to reduce the above gaps to zero, it is imperative that more efforts are channelled into significantly reducing these gaps. The Adjustments Passport initiative aims to impact precisely that.

Addressing the challenges of utilising support provided by UK Government and HEIs

The Adjustments Passport¹⁸ aims to address this as it is designed to aid the transition of the disabled person from education into work. More specifically, the aim is for the Adjustments Passport to provide disabled students with an up-to-date record of the

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-passport-to-help-disabled-graduates-get-in-to-employment>

adjustments they are currently using at university and outline any future in-work support needs they may have. The information carried in the passport will reduce the need for the disabled student to have to repeat details of their disability and how it could affect them in work. The passport will also help to raise awareness of Access to Work and the support it can provide. Hence, when a disabled graduate applies for Access to Work, the passport can be used to reduce the need for holistic assessment where the needs are documented. The passport will also support potential employers by documenting the in-work support the student requires and raising awareness of what support they can potentially receive through Access to Work.

As a whole, the Adjustments Passport aims to support and empower the disabled student by using it as a communication tool to enable the student to have a more structured and confident conversation about their disability and the adjustments they need with employers. When fully implemented, it would provide the living link between SEND, DSA and Access to Work and serve the disabled person throughout their life.

Aims and objectives

The Adjustments Passport Evaluation aimed to determine the level of potential effectiveness of the Adjustments Passport committed to in Government's National Disability Strategy.¹⁹ In particular, the project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the passport during its phase of completion and early use with employers, aiming to meet the following objectives:

- assess how disabled students perceived the usefulness and ease of use of the Adjustments Passport.
- understand the experience of disabled students in completing the Adjustments Passport, its suitability, impact on self-confidence in having disability/adjustment needs conversations, impact on finding/maintaining work, and impact on in-work support and the Access to Work application process.

¹⁹ Memorandum of Understanding Between The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) And The Department for Education (DfE) And Universities taking part in the Adjustments Passport Pilot (University of Wolverhampton, Manchester Metropolitan University, Kings College London). March 2022. p.1-2

- Understand the experience of disability practitioners experiences of helping students complete the Adjustments Passport; its suitability/usability; impact on supporting conversations with students about their disability/adjustments needs; impact on their capacity to support students finding/apply for work; impact on the visibility of in-work support available to students; impact on their capacity to support students with the Access to Work application process; and impact on current assessment and data-gathering processes.
- Understand employer’s perceptions and feelings towards the Adjustments Passport; its impact on their ability to recruit/support disabled individuals; impact on supporting conversations with individuals about their disability/adjustments needs; impact on the provision of in-work support; impact on current assessment processes for in-work adjustments; and support and impact on their awareness and capacity to support individuals with the Access to Work application process.

Scope

Tables 5 illustrates the scope of the issue, outlining the number of students recorded as having a disability at the University of Wolverhampton and at King’s College London. Table 6 provides further context by giving an overview of the range of disabilities amongst students at the University of Wolverhampton.

Table 5: Number of current* students at the University of Wolverhampton and King’s College London recorded as having a disability in the HESA field in 2021/2022

Level of Study	University of Wolverhampton	King’s College, London
Undergraduate	3338	3370
Postgraduate (Taught)	1091	1981
Postgraduate (Research)	77	624
Total	4506	5975

Note: ‘Current’ in this case means they are active students so does not include those on a break from studies or dormant, for example.

Table 6: Number of disabled students per disability enrolled at the University of Wolverhampton in 2021/22 academic year.

Disability	Number declared
Asperger's syndrome	1
Asperger's syndrome/ autistic spectrum disorder	1
Blind/ Visual impairment	55
Deaf/ Hearing impairment	106
Dyslexia	9
Hearing impairment	2
Long standing illness or health	469
Mental health condition	1148
Mobility - wheelchair, etc.	111
Not listed above	246
Other disability	4
Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)	8
Other physical disability	5
Other specific learning difficulty (e.g. Dyspraxia)	91
Social and emotional difficulties	1
Social / communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome / other autistic spectrum disorder	201
Specific Learning Difficulty	1329
Temporary Disability	16
Two or more	703
Total	4506

Methodology

A mixed-method design was used for the evaluation involving quantitative and qualitative data collection, and a final synthesis of the data. There were two stages to data collection:

3. **Online Surveys** with disabled final year undergraduate and postgraduate students at two universities to understand their perceptions regarding the usefulness of the Adjustments Passport, ease of use of the Adjustments Passport and appropriateness of the Adjustments Passport's design
4. **Focus groups** were used to build upon the data gathered from the survey study completed by students in stage one. In this second phase, qualitative focus group interviews were used to explore in greater detail the perceptions and understandings of the Adjustments Passport of three important stakeholder groups: disabled final year university students, disability support practitioners and a range of graduate employers in the public and private sector. The focus group interviews enabled the gathering of a wide range of viewpoints to provide a stronger context, meaning and insight into each group's unique perspective, which was used to better understand how the Adjustments Passport document can meet the employment support needs of disabled students in higher education.

Each stage is explained further below.

The **online surveys** consisted of a baseline confidence measure asking disabled students to indicate their agreement with the statement, "I am confident I could discuss adjustments with employers". Responses were gathered on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = completely agree and 5 = completely disagree. A lower score indicated a higher level of confidence in being able to discuss adjustments with employers. This was followed by a short video introducing the Adjustments Passport for Students (HM Government, 2021). This provided a brief overview and the key information regarding the format, context, and use of the Adjustments Passport. Adapted formats were available on request. Participants then completed the Adjustments Passport online. This was followed by the Adjustments Passport Survey comprising of 12 questions relating to the perceived usefulness of the

Adjustments Passport, ease of use of the Adjustments Passport and appropriateness of the Adjustments Passport's design. Example items included "The passport will make it easier for me to receive the adjustment support I require as I move into employment" and "The passport will increase my confidence to discuss reasonable adjustments with employers" (See Appendix 1 for full survey). Responses were gathered on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. Therefore, a lower score indicated a higher level of agreement with each statement. Demographic information was also collected (age, gender, ethnicity, level of study, disability). Upon completion of the survey, participants were presented with a debrief thanking them for their participation and offering useful website links and information regarding disabilities and work.

Focus group topic guides were developed for each of the three participant groups: final year disabled students, disability support practitioners and employers. Participants were asked a set of open-ended questions about their perceptions and understandings of the Adjustments Passport. The topic guide for each participant group is described further below.

Students

Topics/questions asked of students related to their perceptions, understandings and experiences of completing the Adjustments Passport, its suitability/usability, impact on their self-confidence to discuss their disability/adjustment needs with others, its impact on finding/maintaining work, and its impact on in-work support and the Access to Work application process. The final student topic guide can be found in Appendix 2

Disability support practitioners

Topics/questions asked of the disability support practitioners related to their perceptions and understandings of the Adjustments Passport, its suitability/usability, its impact on supporting their conversations with students about their disability/adjustments needs, its impact on their capacity to support students finding/applying for work, its impact on the visibility of in-work support available to students, its impact on their capacity to support students with the Access to Work application process, and its impact on current

assessment and data-gathering processes. The final disability support practitioner's topic guide can be found in Appendix 3.

Employers

Topics/questions asked of employers related to their perceptions and understandings of the Adjustments Passport, its impact on their ability to recruit/support disabled individuals, its impact on supporting their conversations with individuals about their disability/adjustments needs, its impact on the provision of in-work support, its impact on current assessment processes for in-work adjustments and support, and its impact on their awareness and capacity to support individuals with the Access to Work application process. The final employer's topic guide can be found in Appendix 4.

Online survey implementation and sampling

Recruitment of participants was facilitated by the Disability Service teams at the two participating institutions, with there being slight variations in approach due to differences in ethical approvals from the two institutions. Recruitment emails were sent out to all students registered with a disability at the University of Wolverhampton and to all students at Kings College, London, requesting only those with disabilities to take part. The invitations to take part in an online survey were sent out between May 2022 and July 2022. Disability Services staff provided any necessary support needed for completion of the survey. 146 disabled students completed the survey. Participants ages ranged from 18 to 53 years ($M = 25.58$, $SD = 8.40$), and a majority of the participants were female (71.5%). Table 7 summarises the achieved sample for the online survey, with full details of the sample available in Appendix 5. It should be noted that a number of students had more than one disability. In these cases, this is categorised as multiple disabilities. Multiple disabilities most commonly included a specific learning disability and social/communication impairment or a mental health condition.

Table 7: Online survey participant demographic information

Demographic		Total
Gender	Male	34
	Female	103
Ethnicity	White	79
	Black	29
	Asian	28
	Mixed ethnicity	7
Level of Study	Undergraduate	87
	Postgraduate	44
Disability	Specific Learning Disability	38
	Social/Communication Impairment	8
	Long-standing illness	8
	Mental Health Condition	25
	Physical Impairment	12
	Serious hearing or visual impairment	5
	Multiple Disabilities	30

Source: AP pilot survey

Focus group implementation and sampling

Eight focus groups and one interview were carried out online using the MS Teams platform in June and July of 2022, with each interview ranging between 45 to 90 minutes in duration. Each focus group comprised a small group discussion of no more than seven participants, and participants were encouraged to share and discuss their views of the Adjustments Passport with the other members of the group.

Disabled students

Final year students who participated in the survey in phase one were invited to participate in a focus group discussion to provide additional information on their views and understandings of the Adjustments Passport. Three focus groups were conducted with seven students of the two participating universities (FG 1 = 3 participants; FG 2 = 2 participants; FG 3 = 2 participants). An additional one-to-one interview was conducted with one student. The sample comprised seven females and one male with ages ranging between 21 and 57 (mean = 27.9 years). Seven participants were undergraduates and one was a postgraduate, three participants were international students. Participants had a range of physical, mental and learning difficulties with seven of the eight participants experiencing a combination of two or more of these issues.

Disability support practitioners

Two focus groups were conducted with 12 disability support practitioners (FG 1 = 7 participants; FG 2 = 5 participants) based in the Student Support and Wellbeing Services departments of the two participating universities. Their job roles included: disability & inclusion advisors, student support co-ordinators, BSL/English interpreters and specialist tutors, disability support & inclusion managers, and a senior careers consultant.

Employers

Three focus groups were conducted with the 14 representatives of 12 organisations (FG 1 = 6 participants; FG 2 = 4 participants; FG 3 = 4 participants), of which 10 of the organisations were large national/multinational companies (private sector = 8 organisations; public sector = 1 organisation; non-profit sector = 1 organisation) and two were small or medium-sized enterprises (i.e., <250 employees) (private sector = 1 organisation; public sector = 1 organisation). These organisations were recruited through the careers and employability centres and were existing contacts of the participating universities in this pilot research.

The types of business and areas of activity of the participating organisations spanned biotechnology, pub and hotel operations, car rental, accountancy, law, public housing and higher education. The job roles of the representatives of these organisations included: management, data-security, Human Resources, recruitment and employability-related

roles with many participants holding a combined role and/or responsibility for disability and inclusivity practice within their respective organisations.

Data analysis

Survey data was imported into SPSS v28 and analysed using a range of statistical procedures including:

- descriptive statistics of the responses to the Adjustments Passport survey
- comparative analysis exploring differences or similarities between the responses to the survey according to demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, disability). These comparisons were subjected to tests for statistical significance, using independent samples t-tests and Analysis of Variance
- further comparative analysis exploring differences or similarities in confidence to discuss adjustments pre- and post- completion of the Adjustments Passport, also taking into account disabilities. These comparisons were subjected to tests for statistical significance, using paired samples t-tests and Analysis of Variance.

Throughout the report, the term “significant difference” is used where data between comparison groups shows a difference at the 95% confidence level.

Focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analysed using an inductive and ‘data-driven’ qualitative approach informed by Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RFA), as delineated by Braun & Clarke (e.g., 2020). Separate analyses were made for each of the three participant groups: disabled students, disability support practitioners and employers. In each case, data were open-coded to best represent the underlying meaning as communicated by participants and their meanings were emphasised. Coding and thematic development operated at a primarily descriptive or semantic level, although more interpretative latent codes were also employed where appropriate and were used to help make sense of the semantic content of the data. The interviews were analysed independently of one another on a case-by-case (within) basis, drawing out themes of

importance; before a cross-case (between-case) analysis drew these concepts and themes together for each of the three participant groups as a whole.

Data limitations

There are several data limitations that should be considered.

- Recruitment of participants took place at the end of the academic year. This may have led to low response rates for the survey due to students not accessing university emails upon completion of the academic year.
- Recruitment approaches differed between the two institutions due to ethical approvals. At the University of Wolverhampton, only students registered with a disability were contacted; at Kings College, London, all students were contacted but only those registered with a disability were required to respond. While this may have enabled non-disabled students to access the survey, comparison of data between the two institutions shows equivalence in responses.
- This is a small-scale pilot which includes a relatively small sample size taking part. Due to this, extensive sub-sample quantitative analysis is not conducted. This means that intersectionality is not fully considered. However, analysis is conducted on individual sub-groups, allowing some insight into potential differences or similarities based on gender, ethnicity and disability.
- The subjective and interpretative nature of the findings from the qualitative focus groups, which prioritises the uniqueness of the individual experience of a small sample of purposively selected participants in their own context, circumscribes the external validity (i.e., generalisability or transferability) of the findings and the extent to which they can be extrapolated to other individuals, groups and contexts.

While it is important to acknowledge these limitations, the use of data triangulation in the evaluation, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from two different institutions and considering student, employer and disability practitioner views in the focus groups, ensures that the overall evaluation provides a solid basis for assessing the utility and viability of the Adjustments Passport.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 presents the findings from the online surveys, providing an overview of disabled students' perceptions of the utility of the Adjustments Passport. Chapters 3 - 5 present the findings of the focus groups for each of the three participant groups: employers (Chapter 3), disability support practitioners (Chapter 4) and disabled final-year students (Chapter 5). Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and recommendations from the pilot evaluation.

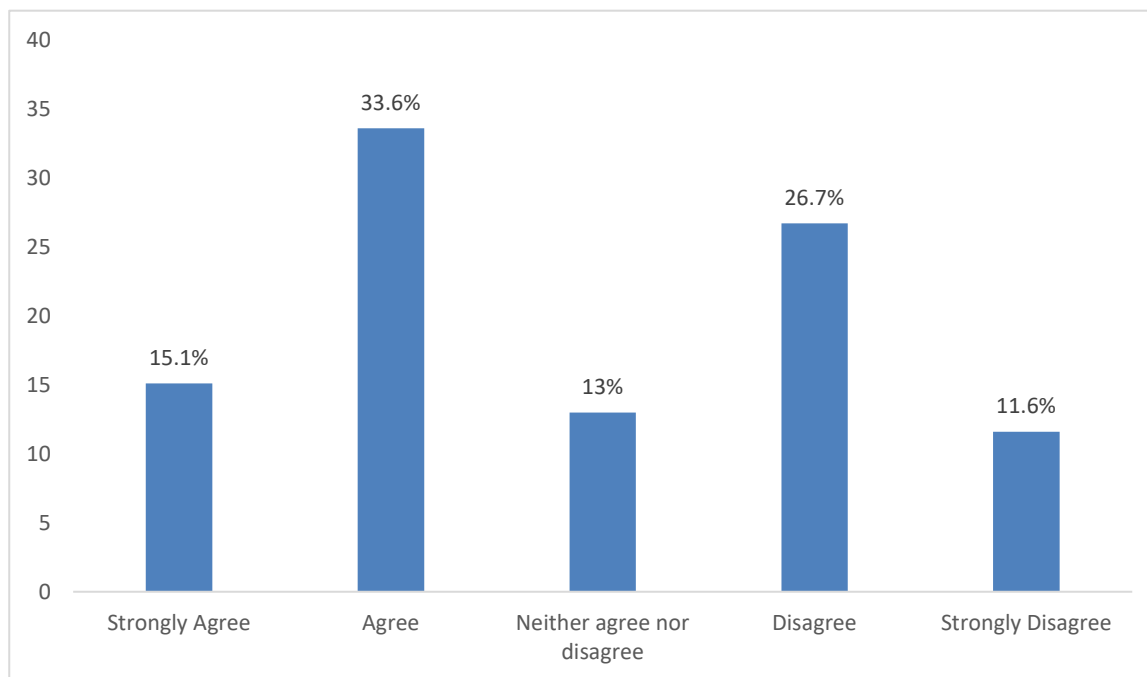
Chapter 2. Online survey findings

Mean scores on the baseline confidence and Adjustments Passport survey were compared across the two institutions, indicating no significant differences. Therefore, due to the similarity in responses between the institutions, the online survey data is amalgamated across the two institutions.

Baseline confidence in discussing adjustments

Prior to being introduced in full to the Adjustments Passport, participants were asked whether they were confident that they could discuss adjustments with employers. Figure 1 summarises participant's responses to this question. 48.6% of disabled students indicated agreement with this statement. Thus, more than half of the sample did not feel confident in being able to have this discussion.

Figure 1: I am confident I could discuss adjustments with employers

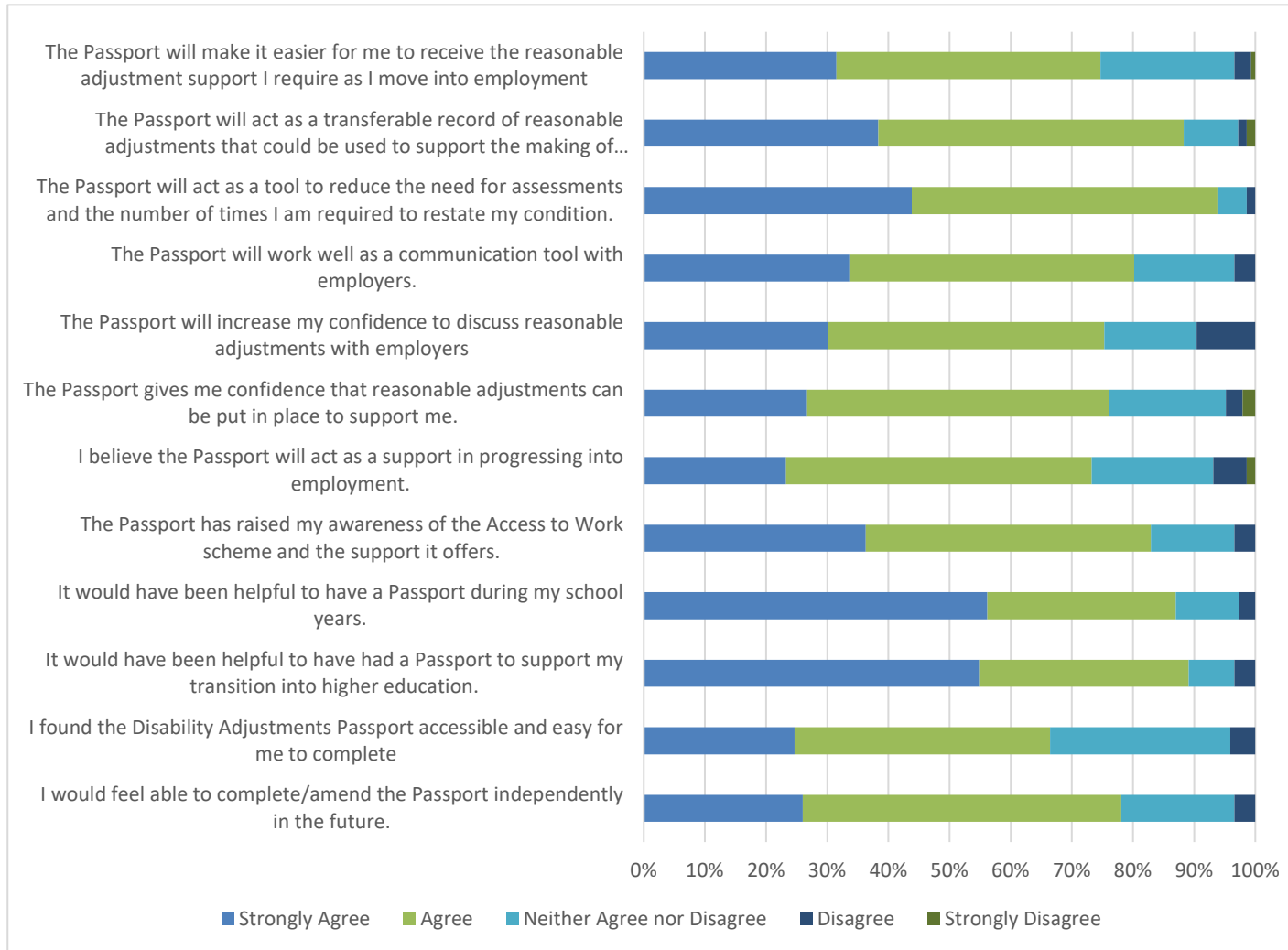


Source: AP Pilot Survey

Adjustments Passport Survey

Responses to the survey questions are summarised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Level of agreement with statements on the Adjustment Passport Pilot Survey



Source: AP Pilot Survey

As Figure 2 indicates, there was general agreement that the Adjustments Passport would have a positive impact for the participants in being able to gain reasonable adjustments. The Adjustments Passport was seen as a useful tool overall in providing a record of their adjustments. 88.4% agreed (combining strongly agree and agree responses) that the Adjustments Passport would act as a transferable record of reasonable adjustments that could be used to support the making of adjustments throughout their career journey and 93.8% agreed that the Adjustments Passport will act as a tool to reduce the need for assessments and the number of times, they are required to restate their condition.

Three quarters of participants (74.7%) agreed that the Adjustments Passport would make it easier for them to receive the reasonable adjustment support they required as they moved into employment, with 76% being confident that reasonable adjustments could be put in place to support them. 73.3% believed the Adjustments Passport would act as a support in progressing into employment; 19.9% of respondents however were ambivalent to this statement expressing neither agreement nor disagreement here.

The Adjustments Passport was also seen as a useful tool in having adjustment-based conversations. 80.1% agreed that the Adjustments Passport will work well as a communication tool with employers and 75.3% agreed that it would increase their confidence to discuss reasonable adjustments with employers. However, 9.6% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

For 82.9% of respondents the Adjustments Passport raised their awareness of the Access to Work scheme and the support it offers.

There was strong support for an earlier introduction of the Adjustments Passport. 87% felt it would have been useful to have an adjustment passport during their school years and 89% felt it would have been useful to have had a passport to support their transition into Higher Education.

There was room for improvement in terms of how accessible and easy to complete the Adjustments Passport was seen as being with only 66.4% of respondents agreeing with this statement. 29.5% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed but 4.1% disagreed that the Adjustments Passport was accessible and easy to complete. However, 78.1% agreed

that they felt able to complete/amend the passport independently in the future with only 3.4% disagreeing with this statement.

Adjustments Passport Pilot Survey: demographic analysis

Demographic analysis considered differences and similarities in mean agreement with the baseline confidence measure and each statement on the Adjustments Passport Survey according to gender, ethnicity, and disability. Table 7 details the demographics of the sample.

There were no differences between male and female participants in their responses to the survey. Note non-binary responses were not considered in the analysis due to low numbers of participants identifying as such.

For the purposes of analysis, ethnicity was recategorized into the wider groupings of White, Black, Asian, Mixed. No significant differences were reported in responses on the Adjustments Passport survey between the different ethnic groupings.

Comparisons in responses to the Adjustments Passport survey were made across the four most commonly stated disabilities in the participant sample (a specific learning disability; mental health condition; physical impairment; multiple disabilities). No significant differences were reported between disabilities.

Confidence in discussing reasonable adjustments

Comparing the baseline confidence scores (*I am confident I could discuss adjustments with employers*) with the post passport confidence scores (*The Passport will increase my confidence to discuss reasonable adjustments with employers*) shows us that the Adjustments Passport led to participants feeling significantly more confident ($M = 2.86$ vs $M = 2.04$) in their ability to discuss adjustments with employers ($t(145) = 7.48, p < 0.01$). No significant differences in confidence were reported across the four most frequently reported disabilities.

Chapter 3. Focus group findings: employers

The findings of the focus groups with employers are presented below. A total of three main themes were generated and a summary of these are shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Summary of main themes (employers)

Main Themes
1) "One stop shop": information accessibility
1a. Comprehensive
1b. Efficient
1c. Cultivate discussion
2) Systemic compatibility: integration with pre-existing schemes
2a. Educational pathways
2b. Governmental schemes
2c. Organisational compatibility
2d. Recruitment
3) Empowerment: enabling autonomy
3a. Confidentiality
3b. Ownership and authentication
3c. Alleviate Barriers
3d. Lifelong Journey

1. “One stop shop”: information accessibility

The first theme “*One stop shop*”: *information accessibility*” describes the capacity for the Adjustments Passport (AP) to allow employers immediate access to all adjustment-related information in a singular document.

1a. Comprehensive

Employers unanimously agreed that the AP document should contain complete documentation of the individual’s needs, spanning from education throughout their employment journey. The first sub-theme “*Comprehensive*” signals employers’ request for accessibility to all-inclusive records of both past and present disability-related information. Specifically, it was suggested that the AP take on a “modular” format, whereby an expansive amount of information can be quickly navigated, “cascading” and retracting to disclose relevant information for use in all potential workplace situations:

... the document needs to get bigger if it's going to truly travel from one end of education all the way through into the workplace and be the one stop shop of information around the supports and technologies assessments that has been provided. - LU

1b. Efficient

Employers were emphatic that rapid accessibility to previously documented adjustment information could save establishments valuable time and resources. The second sub-theme “*Efficient*” reflects the potential of the AP to act as a “shortcut” to boost overall workplace efficiency, when providing support for employees with additional workplace needs. By compiling a record of prior assessments and adjustments, the need for unnecessary, time-consuming, and costly reassessment can be mitigated:

One would assume they'll be able to hit the ground running because you would be able to use the passport to understand the requirements from the

get go and that would ensure that they don't have anxiety about their first day of work. They don't have anxiety going on that it wouldn't provide them with any stress. And I think that's the kind of important thing with this whole kind of process is that they don't need to have those difficult conversations essentially because they're already providing the information that the employer needs... - **DM**

However, it was suggested to avoid solely generating a passive list of prior adjustments. Instead, the AP must also demonstrate the assessment-based evidence required for adjustment justification, to allow establishments to act. If the passport is not integrated throughout the evidentiary process itself, it will not reduce the time required for completing current assessment or reassessment process:

...the focus for the document is not on the evidence, but actually through the focus groups it's clear that people having to be assessed again and again and again, that's big. So obviously it's something the government may kind of learn from and consider because as it stands, it's a list of adjustments not that much focused on what is the basis for those adjustments? – **GW**

Another crucial benefit of comprehensive information access is to alleviate the need for consistent re-discussion when moving to other organisations or internal movement within a workplace. Corporate roles are described as “rarely static,” requiring continuous exposure to novel environments and liaison with various stakeholders. Instantaneous non-verbal information access in digital format reduces the requirement for time-consuming, repetitive, and anxiety-inducing verbal discussions of the same adjustments with unfamiliar colleagues:

...I mean, the reason why we're looking at passport ourselves is that it's actually really challenging and anxiety inducing to continually raise your needs to new project managers all the time, so it would be really beneficial for an organization structured like ours. - **FI**

Previously, managers or project leaders had to meet with and get to know an individual physically or virtually, to fully understand and establish their adjustment needs. The AP, however, allows access to adjustment information prior to meeting the passport user, which can enable employers to be proactive, particularly with regard to supporting the individual's soft needs, such as communication preferences:

I was thinking about the usefulness of this [the AP] internally, we're a multinational employer operating in X countries. So we have like migration of staff and often when an employee comes into a new department, you don't know much about them other than what they do and what they did before. And often you'll learn about maybe disabilities or requirements or adjustments they need actually get to know them. But for me, like an internally, passports are a really simple way of you seeing if a new employee had disability, you'd get that before you got to meet them. You could then make it judgments and it'd be really nice easy conversation. So I think like, once you're into employment, I think it's really, really useful. - **RS**

However, regarding the Access to Work application process, employers consider that the passport would not boost efficiency if it could not be submitted as a recognised official document for application. If the passport is independent of the Access to Work application form, then it would only act as an additional point of reference to be manually copied over to the pre-existing form. In this sense, it would not boost efficiency when requesting financial or practical support through Access to Work/the government.

One participant expressed that, historically, the delay in discovering the adjustment needs of newly recruited employees has further lengthened the already lengthy process of applying for practical and financial support from schemes such as Access to Work. Equally, employees who did not disclose their needs immediately experienced workplace disparities which hindered both their engagement and productivity. Due to immediate information access, the adjustments passport could enable efficient, proactive adjustment facilitation by allowing employers to immediately order specialised equipment or apply for funding:

I think in relation to my personal experience with you know, on boarding new starters to their business, especially when they've declared a disability, we've had it in the past where later on down the line when we found out more details about what adjustments they require, which has led to access to work getting involved, that's turned into a bit of a lengthy process for the employees getting the right adjustments in place. So I think getting the adjustments passport because we'll know details from the get go. It'll be beneficial to like, say, for example, particularly new starters. That'll be the employer will be able to get their adjustments in place, more promptly for us because we've had cases in the past where it's just, it's been a very drawn out process. - **AB**

...if we're on boarding somebody and they've declared a disability, then we can from the get go, it's we the recruiting manager can meet with them. Do like an assessment to see exactly what they need and if access to work or anybody else needs to get involved or we need some further support then we can do that straight away. Whereas in the past from my experience that where I'm working at the moment is not always happened more promptly because it's led to the fact that the employee hasn't really just has disclosed they've got a disability, but it's just not being delved into further and then it's been raised behind, they've gone off work and it's been highlighted actually they do need some help and support. So with this document I think it will be more beneficial in terms of the employer as well because you're accessing more detailed information about your new starter from the get go. - **AB**

Furthermore, securing adjustments at the earliest stage “engages” the employee, leading them to have increased “*trust and confidence in the company*” that they will have sufficient access to workplace support. Employers therefore hope that by taking immediate action based upon information supplied in the passport, new employees would experience a positive initial impression of their company. Communication at an early stage in employment can also enable employers to be proactive in providing adjustments as quickly as possible. If adjustments are not applied or discussed in the earliest stages, employers expressed fears of poor employee retention.

Another advantage of the passport is that it signals when there is a clear requirement for specialized equipment, allowing businesses to order it in advance. Specialised equipment takes a significant amount of time to acquire, leaving newly employed individuals at a disadvantage prior to its arrival:

In our laboratories, we have benches that are specialized. So you know you can set them on fire and nothing will happen to them but those are quite high up. So those are often custom made or made to order. So we've got a backup desk anyway which but if somebody were to come on board who was in a wheelchair, they would need a bench to work from which is much lower down than these ones. The other reason able bodied peoples sit on you know quite what high chairs. So by having that information up front we can then you know make the adjustments and order equipment in so they can do the job that they need to do. So for us it [the AP] would be very valuable, especially as you can't just go in and you know order something and go and buy it from the shop. - **RT**

The ability to disclose information at the earliest stage via the AP would expedite the process of requesting specialised equipment that is often processed on an international scale. One example provided was that the request process can be time consuming when specialised equipment is processed and acquired from abroad. Employee disadvantage can be avoided by passport-mediated immediate equipment request:

It was just to say that that the point that having made us, that was my exact thinking, it [the AP] just speeds up the process when we initiate a request for any additional software or particular adaptation to a workstation or a working environment. It takes an age to get it done in our company because the requisition goes [abroad] and often the equipment bizarrely comes from [abroad] and it can just take a lot of time. So yeah, that it just speeds up the process. Like if you're going to hire somebody and we know straight up exactly what we need to do to make them be able to be the best in play. Then we can get that done like ASAP, so when they start it's there good to go. So yeah that would be very useful around finding out at the back end and then having that employee at disadvantage because they can't do the job appropriately because of lack of adjustments. - **RS**

1c. Cultivate discussion

In addition to saving valuable time and workplace resources, non-verbal communication via the AP could alleviate discomfort surrounding disclosure of sensitive topics that individuals may be otherwise hesitant to discuss. The third sub-theme '*Cultivate discussion*' encapsulates the capacity for the AP framework to facilitate and promote constructive discussion regarding disabilities. It was claimed that the use of language throughout the document should be standardised, with a "*correct*" and "*appealing*" delivery and full definitions provided for key terms, such as "*adjustment*". Thus, the document will provide users with the vocabulary to describe both physical and invisible disability-related experience in an accessible, inclusive way:

...if you need a framework to support a discussion, it should be sitting in front of you and instantly you have broken down a barrier of how do we address and start this conversation... - **LU**

It was suggested that the AP contain guidance for both employees and employers, with the potential for CPD accredited training offered to support employers that initiate adjustments discussions. Larger organisations may contain pre-existing teams with established experience in carrying out effective disability-related conversation. Conversely, smaller organisations may have limited familiarity and resources when discussing the individual needs of disabled employees. Concerns surrounding the use of standardised and appropriate terminology in both verbal and non-verbal interactions may act as a barrier to effective communication and organisational disability confidence. However, employers maintain that a model or guidance within the AP, in conjunction with complimentary training programs, could facilitate internal workplace cultural change, cultivate empathy, and reduce gaps in understanding:

So for an organization of your size or others where you've got larger organizations then, yes, they'll have to train staff to like prepare for that. So you'll have an Equality Diversity, Inclusion Department who like for in the NHS they have, they have to like make requirements or adjustments for lots and lots of individuals and they actively encourage it at the appropriate times. But if you were a small and medium enterprise, I think that's where we need to kind of like think about it

more closely because they perhaps will have one person who's responsible for each area and then they will not know what questions they have got to ask and how they would go about talking about this sort of thing? - **DM**

Franchise-based employers were mildly apprehensive or expressed "mixed feelings" regarding the repercussions of the passport for expectations regarding their employee standards. For example, fears were expressed in relation to employee liability in relation to appropriate use of language for employees, following passport integration. The solution proposed to alleviate such concerns was once again access to training, designed to teach staff members to use appropriate language during discussions. It was considered that implementing formal documentation in the form of the passport would raise the standard for handling diversity and inclusion in the workplace, which could include consequences surrounding liability. Therefore, staff members should be sufficiently trained to handle sensitive topics in conversation. Though it was further reiterated that the transparency of the passport would instigate discussion at all levels:

I have quite mixed feelings working in a sort of it's not strictly franchise basis, but as you know, I'm a head office employee and we have multiple sites around the country in terms of our operating hubs and the thing that going to use the word scares me very loosely is the fact that we would want appropriate language, we would want our managers well briefed on how to handle any such matters. Of course, they should be as they are now. We would always hope that is the case and that everything is being handled as a disabled employee would hope. But raising the profile by using formal documentation such as this raises the profile across the business of how we are tackling such issues, and that would be the only thing that would be slightly off putting for me and it doesn't necessarily affect the transition itself, but I suppose it raises the standard for that transition because you're putting a formal process in, such as this. We want everybody to be operating to the best of their ability when they're tackling these conversations. - **TC**

As there are a multitude of different routes into the workplace, including direct application to a “*deeper manager*”, graduate schemes, apprenticeships, not all hiring managers would necessarily feel “*comfortable or confident*” having adjustment conversations. Outlining specific adjustments could clearly signal gaps in understanding and need for training for hiring managers, which would cultivate business-wide education. Mixed feelings were once again expressed regarding an upgrade to internal business processes, as while they may be met with some resistance or apprehension, they were thought to be a “*necessary evolution of how people discuss disability with candidates and potential employees.*”

...hit the nail on the head with the transparency of the passport it is going to create more conversations around this ability at all levels. And I mean I just look at the way that people can apply and this is a very positive outcome of the passport by the way, I mean thinking just off my head now there's lots of different routes to apply into the coming our workflow we have lots of different divisions, lots of different areas, some you would just apply direct to a deeper manager, some would go through a graduate route, some we go through Apprentice route and not everybody in that sort of spectrum of hiring manager position are going to become comfortable or confident with some of these conversations. So I think a by-product or a necessary upgrade to current processes would be more focused on how to handle those conversations. Now one thing I do like about the passport and I hope I've understood this right about the passport and I did read it back again when it was sent again is the fact that. It's got an intersection 4. There's actually specific adjustments in there and they are needed and would maybe make the training around those conversations easier. However, there will be other things which aren't on that list which are going to be potentially and as mentioned in the passport that then would need additional training. So maybe concern is the right word maybe it's I think like it's just going to make the necessary evolution of how people discuss disability with candidates and potential employees. - **RS**

In addition to providing a formal way to disclose adjustments, the AP would also indicate when to disclose to employers. The AP was described as a “*valuable*” tool to explain when, how and what to discuss for all parties involved in adjustment discussions. The use of

formal, standardised language was deemed preferential to solely providing an individual interpretation of needs in conversation:

...we measure career confidence as graduates progress throughout the university. So this is probably from very much a graduate perspective, but those questions around disclosure and when to disclose. This [the AP] gives a formal way to disclose, and I think there's really true value in that. And because when talking to individual students about applications and interviews coming up and that question around disclosure is a big one. So when how, what do I say, etc. This really lays it out and speaking from an employee's point of view, hopefully it's that language. Because it's a better formalized language and on a piece of paper that they receive. And they used to receiving it. It's not an individual's interpretation. - HC

2. Systemic compatibility: integration with pre-existing schemes

Theme two "*Systemic compatibility: integration with pre-existing schemes*" represents how the passport must work in collaboration and be compatible with pre-existing educational systems, workplace procedures, and governmental schemes.

2a. Educational pathways

The sub-theme "*Educational pathways*" describes how passport holders will follow diverse paths from education into the workplace. Systems and procedures within educational establishments, such as schools and universities, should be reflected within the document.

Initial assessments and diagnoses conducted during education provide valuable evidence upon which future adjustments are often based. However, due to differences in workplace and educational environments, individuals are often subjected to repeated or substandard reassessment of needs, delays, and additional costs. Employers advocated for documentation of educational assessments, such as those used within Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), to be presented as supporting evidence for use throughout their pathway to employment:

...the focus for the document is not on the evidence, but actually through the focus groups it's clear that people having to be assessed again and again and again, that's big. - **GW**

...if you have a student in education that's having an assessment of needs, why that assessment and needs can't be used in the workplace and the Department for Work and Pensions did actually say at a conference about four or five years ago.... I believe that they would be happy for the DSAS assessment to be used as a starting point in access to work. - **DM**

...So that becomes part of the passport and that follows them through. So they don't need to constantly have to go through that process of assessment over and over again. - **DM**

An additional argument for deriving evidence from earlier assessments is that some alternative pathways to employment, such as apprenticeships, completely bypass higher education. In order for the AP to be integrated into the workplace, it must be compatible with alternative educational routes, rather than having sole passport use amongst university graduates:

...does it [supporting evidence] have to come from a DSA assessment or can it come from earlier assessment? So could it come from say primary or secondary school? I'm just sort of thinking of a lot of people that don't want to go through, you know, further education, higher education, they get to a certain point. And I think you know what I want to go and do something with my hands or whatever. So they go, do you want an apprenticeship? So that's quite important in that regards to whether they do the apprenticeship or not, but they might need qualifications, like a firefighter, for example, so to go within the ranks of the levels of their employment. They've got to do certain things. So they're going to need assistance to do with that. I guess the passport, does it consider the earlier assessments? Rather than the later ones. - **KB**

Employers expressed concern regarding periods of support absence during transition from educational establishments into the workplace, or between institutions. These are stages of high vulnerability whereby many individuals experience increased challenges. However,

support from university or college-based career teams can direct students towards career opportunities and environments best suited towards catering for their needs, as well as their unique strengths. This may include encouraging engagement with graduate schemes that are experienced and equipped to support employees with disabilities:

...when it comes to engaging a disabled student at the end of their degree course when they are influencing or ensuring that they're going into the right place of work, that that might be correct for them in some way or something like that. Because I wonder if that is something that the passport could do. You know we have to talk about Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, work. People who make workplace adjustments at the employee level but I'm thinking about what universities, what the institutions can do within their careers teams with their engagement with graduate schemes and things like that. - **DM**

...whether or not there's something that can be done at a university or college level as well with this passport that gives students an opportunity that gives them that correct opportunity that guides them in the right direction as well. – **DM**

2b. Governmental schemes

Employers repeatedly raised flaws in pre-existing government initiatives, alongside the need to strengthen the entire system to ensure AP efficacy. The sub-theme “*Governmental schemes*” outlines how relevant pre-existing governmental schemes should work in conjunction with the disability passport, such as Access to Work, Disabled Students Allowance, the Disability Confident Scheme, and various funding streams.

Numerous concerns were raised regarding the efficiency and robustness of the Access to Work scheme, to which the AP would be strongly linked. The Access to Work assessment process is described as costly, substandard in comparison to those carried out during education, and subject to delays:

We've got a situation where our government is paying for an assessment of needs at education level and then paying for another assessment of needs that's substandard in the workplace so that access to work assessment is not as robust as the DSA needs. Assessment is within

education. So my question to them would be why you pay for two and when the one that's within education is way better and so the passport should reflect that. - **DM**

In addition to criticisms of the assessment process, employers expressed critique that the Access to Work scheme constitutes “a focus on a problem rather than a focus on changing the culture within the workplace.” Consequently, employers asserted that “strengthening that whole system” would be effective when using the AP in conjunction with established workplace disability procedures. Furthermore, both employers and employees expressed a limited understanding of the Access to Work Scheme, in addition to the practical and financial support available. Nevertheless, larger employers claimed that it would “substantially” raise the profile and awareness of Access to Work within their business:

For us personally, it [the impact of the AP on raising Access to Work Awareness] would be huge, and I think as the people sort of acknowledge part and parcel of why people are here is to improve what you can we take away from this session as well. So we're all looking to do so, but I think. Not only access to work or the priorities and stuff around disability management, but particularly access to work. Its profile will be raised substantially within this business. - **TC**

Some employers admitted that the financial and practical support offered through the Access to Work scheme was “*seldom used*” within their company. As one employer sought to synthesise business practices across companies into one standardised practice, they discovered that Access to Work was rarely accessed in their organisation, much less “*other subsidiaries*”:

Yeah, I looked back, actually, the access to work, grants and funds and in the past, it's been seldom used by us as an employer. And it wasn't until we sort of we streamlined about five years ago and actually tried to bring all our practices across all our various companies into one. Parts, if you like, that we actually was like, well, there's not, everyone's using it in our own organization, let alone and some of the other subsidiaries we've got. - **RS**

The negative response of certain employers to employ individuals who require adjustments or to put them in place is often since due to lack of awareness that adjustments can often be partially or even fully funded through schemes such as Access to Work. By building awareness of the support available, employers will recognise the lack of financial burden that may have been historically perceived to be associated with hiring employees who require adjustments:

...there be some people that are put off by a adjustments depending on the degree of adjustment needed and often it can be partly or fully funded and with the support of even how to implement it or go around it so yeah. Yeah, we've all positive from in that sense. - **RS**

Equally, as not all hiring managers are aware of support available through Access to work, building an awareness of the scheme will enable proactivity to contact and request practical and financial support:

... within our organization, not every recruiting manager will know about the support available. So rather than us going to them to say this employee, your employee needs this reasonable adjustment is more being more proactive and they getting in touch with us saying actually you know I want to get into with access to work because I need XYZ support in place for my employee, for my team. - **AB**

However, it was widely regarded that the Passport should form an integral part of the Access to Work application process, which is currently completed through a separate application form. More importantly, the Passport would only be able to assist with Access to Work application process if they were combined. If this was not the case, the AP would exist only as a point of reference that would not expedite the process at all. Equally, if the passport was not submitted as part of the application process for Access to Work, it was thought that its only benefit would be to support graduates to articulate their individual needs. This purpose was also considered to be superfluous to requirements, as graduates are inherently educated in articulating individual needs throughout their studies. Moreover, it was suggested to integrate the passport, not only into the recruitment and appraisal process, but also formal governmental applications on a broad scale. If the passport was

acknowledged as an official multi-purpose document, its core usability and status would be amplified:

The passport is going to become part of the application process to secure an access to work grant and assuming that it's not I don't know that it would help because the form sits separately and requires very specific set of languages as dictated by the application process for the access to work. So unless the two were actually put together then I think it would be one form and then another form or be it a point of reference, but you're still going to have to probably annotate the information across or get it from the employee. - **RS**

... if it [the AP] was one and part of the same process and you could submit your passport as part of that application that would make an awful lot of sense I think the only real benefit is it helps students graduates and that's from my perspective. Shouldn't graduates articulate easily at the adjustments because it's all there and they can move it across to the other form, but yeah, in integrating it into processes, not only through the recruitment process, not only through appraisals, but also into governmental applications and everything else and having it, yeah, truly acknowledged as an official document that can be used for all these purposes would certainly enhance its strength. - **HC**

2c. Organisational compatibility

The sub-theme "*Organisational compatibility*" highlights the extent to which previously successful adjustments, such as those accessible in universities, may be incompatible with some work organisations. The AP should therefore facilitate equivalent solutions that can be employed within a broad range of work environments.

One suggestion was that once an individual is employed within a company, the organisation would alter the digital passport document in collaboration with its owner, to create a new passport that is specific to both the individual and the context of the work environment. A digital copy of the AP would be transferred onto the organisations' "*own internal systems*" to then be further modified for purpose:

...once somebody's working for us, we have all our own internal systems and to be honest, it [the AP] probably be something that we've taken sort of

transfer into our own systems. Once that person was fully sort of on boarded. So we'd probably say they came in with a passport with them and probably end up with their own sort of [organisational] passport at the end of it. So digital is definitely easier for that regard. - **FI**

In order for the AP to be practically "*fit for purpose*," its standardised and accessible format must enable those responsible to fully "*embed*" the document into the human resourcing department, application, and recruitment process. It was emphasised that employers encounter increased challenges during the recruitment phase, as the requirements of the Equality Act limit the extent to which adjustments are disclosed or discussed in detail prior to employment offers. Consequently, employers focus solely on the requirements necessary to support applicants throughout the recruitment process at this stage, with more detailed conversations surrounding adjustments occurring once the offer has been accepted. The AP could provide "*valuable*" adjustment support for all stages: from initial application through to active employment:

We have tried to be quite careful in terms of discussing specific individual workplace adjustments prior to job offer just because of the requirements in the Equality Act. We're really happy to talk to people generally about what's possible and sort of have a positive conversation around it, but we don't really go into detail. I mean, our understanding of the equality act that we can't really go into detail. So we focus entirely on what they need for the recruitment process. We support them through that and then we'd have a discussion post job offer about it. That's when I could see this document being really valuable. - **FI**

Concerns were raised regarding the practical application and "*functionality*" of the AP at the "*individual level*" due to the vast diversity of systems and procedures for handling unique employee requirements. Furthermore, previously effective adjustments accessible within higher education, such as specialised assistive technologies, may not be compatible with established internal workplace systems or provide the most effective support to fulfil their specific job role:

...there might be things that students have had access to or have been used to that were either relevant to a university context and or, you know,

a college context and not the workplace. Or there might be tools that they've used to that aren't compatible with our systems, but where we would have an alternative. - **FI**

However, by documenting a list of previously used technologies in a “*catalogue*”, companies would be able to compare, match up, or suggest alternative solutions that are both compatible with internal networks and suitable for carrying out their organisational duties. The AP would therefore comprise both listed documentation of previous adjustments and sections used to discuss potential alternative solutions. Such a structure would provide sufficient flexibility to transport and modify adjustments to compliment specific environments or roles.

In terms of organisational type and size, it was declared that larger establishments are considered to have considerably more experience and resources to facilitate adjustments than smaller organisations, who may not have specifically trained departments to manage disability-related needs:

...the larger establishments obviously very used to having this [making reasonable adjustments]. But as **DM** pointed out, the medium to smaller ones, they're not going to be as used to it. They're not going to know how to handle it. - **KB**

Nevertheless, embedding complimentary CPD accredited training modules alongside the AP could enable ongoing support for professionals responsible for handling disability information. This would also ensure organisational compatibility for smaller establishments and the ability for them to provide effective provisions.

Equally, “*portability*” of the AP is essential not only between education and the workplace, but within the organisation itself. As an individual changes their role within the same establishment, every workplace scenario may require further use of the AP to establish rapid reciprocal understanding of requirements for both the individual, project managers and additional colleagues.

It was suggested that businesses who have previously employed passport holders could address which kinds of adjustments have worked historically for employees with similar needs or diagnoses. Previously successful adjustments could be suggested initially or be used to inspire creative resolutions for new employees and existing employers. In addition to building confidence when employing passport holders, employers would be encouraged to learn how to support the needs of their employees actively and practically in a variety of contexts. While the individual needs of each employee must be respected, the use of historical information can enable rapid proactivity at an early stage.

One advantage that was raised for organisations adopting the AP is a subsequent boost in employer desirability, due to the reassurance that employers will ensure reasonable adjustments are met. However, it was agreed that this would be reliant upon the organisation's ability to fulfil actions outlined in the AP agreement, both during and following recruitment. The AP would ensure a level of employer "*liability*" to ensure employee needs are met. To satisfy AP agreements, discussion must include how to adapt adjustments to suit the business.

Concerns were raised regarding instances where preferences or adjustments may conflict with business requirements. Employers advocate for a degree of flexibility for both the employer and employee, with the agreement maintaining an understanding that adjustments must be "*reasonable*" within the work context. "*Where is the reasonable?*" AP integration requires a common ground to be found between the employer and employee, which both parties must commit to fulfilling once agreed upon.

Additionally, it was suggested that a "*robust plan*" followed by ongoing reassessments and discussions are crucial to ensure ongoing functionality of the "live" AP document. As the AP will follow an individual throughout their educational and career journey, it is necessary that it reflects the changing needs of both the individual and their work environment over time. Employers agreed that adjustments must be monitored and discussed, as well as being revised in collaboration with specialists within HR. The response to initial adjustments will also dictate how the document is updated and written over time. A planned review process could take place at agreed regular intervals to assess the changing needs of both the employer and the business.

It was suggested that a procedure should also be in place if agreed adjustments are not respected. For example, if an individual needs to raise concerns of inadequate support, they must have confidence in their company to initiate such discussions and be reassured that they will be respected. The document is only as functional as those enforcing it, thus organisational reluctance to commit to a new AP procedure could provide an initial barrier to adjustment facilitation. AP implementation would require business wide commitment where departments across an entire organisation are all equally dedicated to fulfilling the adjustments outlined within the document. Therefore, communication and engagement are necessary to ensure that the AP works in practice.

In terms of work progression, it was considered that a change in organisational culture must take place to ensure inclusivity at all levels. For example, concerns were raised regarding increased engagement with external stakeholders at higher levels in certain business environments. Disclosure of needs to external parties can lead to loss of clients or in the case where a code of conduct document is signed to prevent this, legal documents do not ensure respect at an individual level. Employers advocated for the need to *“not only retain disabled people but to promote them.”* Inclusivity and diversity must therefore be proactively guaranteed at every level, rather than reduced to verbal platitudes and positive intentions. Preventing employees from achieving a promotion is interpreted as a form of discrimination, which can be prevented at higher levels by reflecting adjustments that enable career progression within the AP.

It was stated that the Passport wouldn't change the current internal assessment process in work adjustments and support, though it would provide additional information to support the process:

It [the AP] wouldn't [impact the current assessment process in work adjustments]. I don't think it changed it We would still do the assessments that we do and internally. I think that we do a risk assessments on any adjustments we make outside like standard practice and I don't think that would change. I just think it would give us a bit more to work with. - **RS**

Though evidence is required to put adjustments in place, the process of providing evidence is timely and costly, with the amount of evidence required dependent upon the extent of the adjustment. For example, minor adjustments require less evidence, while substantial

or costly adjustments that require more commitment from the employer require further evidence and external support for schemes such as Access to Work:

Well, we kind of we're trying to ask about evidence that disabled people have to bring to organizations in order for reasonable adjustments to be put in place, not so much for the risk assessment. We all do it, but the disabled people often come to us and say on every stage, wherever we move from high school to college to university to first workplace second and so on. But we are asked to produce evidence and so this is timely. This is costly and it's kind of difficult so that is what we were trying to assess here. - **GW**

No single process can address all individual needs, which must be assessed on a "case-by-case basis." However, the Passport would reduce time and cost of current "evidential practices.":

I think there's probably an argument that it [evidence required] would relate to the size of the adjustment that's required, so for instance, perhaps there's someone with someone who is dyslexic and you know, their minimum reasonable requirements are minor in terms of software or more time allowance etc. in order to do something. The not putting a very human aspect to it. You know, there's not much proof that it is required. That's because you're not asking for substantial changes, whereas if the requirement is more costly and acknowledging that access to work exists, etc. If there is more commitment to be had from the employer, perhaps there might still be a need to request further evidence. It's really difficult to say because it's on a case-by-case basis, you know. And no one procedure could ever address an individual person, but I think it [the AP] would do some to help reduce some of the evidential practices. - **TC**

2d. Recruitment

A large focus for the employers was the implementation of the passport throughout recruitment. The sub-theme "Recruitment" explores how the passport could be integrated into the seemingly conflicting recruitment process: a "*discriminatory*" process by design. Though employee selection is necessary to find the most appropriate candidate, it was

suggested that the passport could highlight to employers the factors that should not be included in the process of applicant discrimination:

I just think it's [the AP] really interesting because recruitment is a discriminatory process that's what it's set up to do. It's a funnelling, but I think the true value in the passport is, hopefully it highlights what shouldn't be used in that discriminatory process which is what recruitment is really all about. - **HC**

Some application forms include a disclaimer that announces to applicants that they will not be discriminated against based on disability or additional workplace needs. However, this disclaimer is described as “wordy” and “seldom used,” making the message less accessible. Despite this disclaimer, many applicants do not disclose adjustments throughout the application process for fear that their application would be immediately disregarded. Furthermore, some employers consider that announcing or highlighting diversity and inclusion statements in the application form itself may actually discourage disclosure or act as a barrier more than a form of encouragement. On the other hand, having an official, standardised and “transparent” document through which to disclose may alleviate anxieties surrounding disclosure at an early stage. Moreover, applicants should be made aware of the potential advantages of disclosing adjustments within their application, as disclosure guarantees that their application/candidacy is prioritised for interview, providing more of an advantage than barrier to recruitment:

...we prioritize and we give priority to candidates who are underrepresented, so it's actually an advantage for us to know up front that this individual has the disability cause they're pretty much guaranteed an interview for long as they meet the minimal criteria. So it's actually an advantage to have it rather than a disadvantage and maybe you know that's something that we can promote and make. - **RT**

The efficacy of the passport was questioned for use amongst those of whom written documents are the barrier, for example in the case of dyslexia. For such applicants, completing a written application form could be a barrier from the onset of their career

journey. Though completion of the passport could be formed in conjunction with university support teams, not all applicants would have access to such support if they had not entered the workplace directly via university.

It was expressed that certain organisations had historically been hesitant to recruit or employ individuals who required adjustments, due to the potential financial and practical burden that they assumed such employees would entail. Furthermore, some employers were concerned that by disclosing an adjustment during the recruitment phase, the applicant could potentially highlight to the employer that they may hypothetically experience a particular barrier or difficulty within the workplace, even if that turns out to not be the case following employment. By emphasising the potential issues an applicant may experience once employed, this could provide a negative initial impression for the hiring manager:

...how we're going to do this adjustment we've never dealt with this before. So does it [the adjustment disclosure] then become a barrier to people into employment because it's kind of highlighting something that is an issue, but it's not huge issue and that's very small adjustments needed, but you might not have known that and you might have employed the person and may just once afterwards before... - **RS**

However, an increased awareness of support and funding via schemes such as Access to Work alleviate the financial burden for employers, promoting an increasingly inclusive and diverse workforce. Additionally, all adjustments would be clearly and concisely declared at the earliest stage, which employers could immediately cross-reference with both internal and external support available.

Some employers from larger organisations were concerned that they frequently use external platforms through which they recruit and process applications, which may affect the ease with which the passport will integrate into the application process:

...looking at larger organisations and how they might use off the shelf platforms to recruit in terms of actually processing applications. So I know we're using an externalized platform. I'm just wondering about the impact in terms of integrating something like this [the AP] and in theory

it shouldn't be too difficult an integration but from other large employer perspectives there might be some hindrances there that it might not integrate as well as we would hope. - **TC**

A computer/algorithm-based recruitment system would not be able to accurately consider/digest passport information and adjustments in the same way as a human recipient. For example, in the case of a dyslexic employee, an algorithm would immediately discriminate against and disregard written applications with grammatical or written errors with little regard for the potential barrier encountered by the applicant:

...often after an application form is processed by a person that actually reads the description text in front of them may be able to also read the passport and digest the information and then make the necessary accommodations for the candidate. A computer or algorithm-based recruitment system that would just be looking at the ticks in the right boxes then move that applicant through wouldn't necessarily be able to digest information in the passport, so I think it might just need a bit of more of thoughtful approach of how it's actually used by the owners of the passports. The potential employees or candidates, how they would position it and get it in front of the right person to get them necessarily judgments because it's all about making that route to employment easier.
- **RS**

It's just how it [the AP] actually would integrate with our current application process as **RS** discussed, and recruitment systems from an IT perspective, that will be very interesting because we have IT issues as it is. - **GR**

If the written application form or CV itself is the barrier, then it was questioned how employers would ensure that the application is viewed and assessed by an individual who can digest the passport adjustments. The application could be diverted for immediate human review only if the applicant had disclosed their adjustment requirements during the application process itself:

But if the application form itself or the CV completion is the barrier, then it kind of like it's chicken and egg. It doesn't really work without the other. So

I think it's just maybe as an employer, we'd have to think about how would that be submitted to us as a supplementary piece of information alongside our normal application route. - **RS**

One employer commented that the post-COVID-19 rise in popularity of virtual or phone-based meetings, largely due to convenience, enables team members to meet without the need to physically see one other. Consequently, employers may not be able to observe visually detectable or physical disabilities and remain unaware of their existence without disclosure. Even when requirements are disclosed, employers would not be able to fully visualise the requirements of the individual in relation to their work environment without observation:

I think the one thing for me that it will be beneficial for in COVID a large amount, all of our interviews were teams based and a lot of them were on video by all means we can see people's faces, but we wouldn't necessarily see, you know, excuse the stereotypical what I'm about to say here. If they've got, you know, no fingers, no legs, if they're in a wheelchair, they could just be in the chair, disability can't always be visible to the eye and it is a case of, you know, something else going on there. And, you know, I think even in a post COVID world, even our managers are still opting for Microsoft Teams interviews and just for convenience - **GR**

Though not all needs are physically visible, the employer remarked that understanding requirements during the interview process would allow for further discussion to build a mutual understanding between the employer and applicant:

So I think having the adjustments you know this is the disability I have would help the interview process for us more so. So then you can you know talk about it at interview if the candidate wants to and you know if we're not on site and the candidate might not want to go on video sometimes they dial in by telephone because some of them haven't got yeah you know a laptop or the laptops at the university and they haven't got it it'd be really interesting to tackle this situation now rather than later

down the line. Sort of at on boarding, or you know in induction for example, and then going through there so. - **GR**

When adjustments are reviewed during recruitment, both employers and applicants will find out at earliest stage whether adjustments can be made at all, rather than only discover the practicalities, or impracticalities, of reasonable adjustments when the applicant is already employed. Such a review would also provide additional time to consider adjustments from recruitment stage and secure a positive first impression of the employer from the applicant. Information contained within the formalised document could be immediately disseminated from the local general recruiting manager to head office as soon as the passport is obtained. This would mitigate unnecessary *“back and forth”* communication between both parties throughout the process:

I also think that it's key that this [the AP] gives us an advantage whereby if we're finding this out at the earliest possible recruitment stage, depending on where you slot it into your processes we can then gauge any reasonable adjustments. So regardless of whether you do go on to employ that employee or not or that perspective employee, you can get off on the right foot by figuring out what adjustments are possible or you are able to accommodate all? Actually if the adjustments are so big that you know you can't accommodate that, it allows you to get to that sooner or if you've got it laid out on a piece of paper in front of you and I'm not saying that you make a snap judgment on that, but whilst you're conducting the next bits of your recruitment process, it gives you the time to go away and look at those things rather than like when they're employed. Let's look at it now. So I think it's really helpful that earlier on you get it and also again looking at our layout across the country in terms of our operations, it means that as soon as the general manager who is doing the recruitment locally gets this document. Well then it's so much quicker to have a formalized document over to head office because they will need support in making usually reasonable adjustments first to be able to assist them with that, it makes that process so much quicker as well. So there's just a lot of back and forth that it would take out of the process. - **TC**

3. Empowerment: enabling autonomy

The third theme "*Empowerment: enabling autonomy*" describes how the AP should continuously support its owner to independently navigate employment, take ownership of their needs, and overcome barriers to career success.

3a. Confidentiality

The sub-theme "*Confidentiality*" emphasises that the passport holder will have sole autonomy over which information is accessible, when, and by whom. Confidential data-handling must comply with governmental legislation, such as GDPR guidelines. As previously discussed, the Equality Act limits the extent to which adjustments can be discussed in detail throughout the recruitment process. However, relevant information can be disclosed at appropriate times throughout the course of employment through use of a "*modular,*" cascading format, with specific sections becoming marked as locked or accessible by its owner. This procedure would account for user consent surrounding disability disclosure, with the potential for additional consent forms for dissemination, as currently demonstrated within the DSA. The passport owner could decide which sections to permit or limit employer access, to further expedite the disclosure process:

When they're not in our system, when they're coming through a recruitment process, I mean it's whatever they could give us access to really that had all the proper sort of safeguards and confidentiality in place. - FI

Once disseminated, the organisations will store a copy of the AP within their own systems, which they would later destroy when employers no longer require the information.

3b. Ownership and authentication

The sub-theme "*Ownership and authentication*" underlines that the passport and adjustments detailed within it belong to their owner, who can choose to alter and disseminate the information at their individual discretion. The AP would be used as a

toolkit for each individual to track their unique journey from education to employment; Thus, the features, content, and presentation of the document should be designed by the individual, rather than organisations. However, a level of consistency in format and dissemination platform could signal authenticity to prospective employers:

...they'll have it [the AP] as their own tool, they can decide to share or not to share with the prospective employer, it's up to them. - **GW**

...of course the idea is that the disabled individual owns this passport and they themselves determine who gets to see what and when... - **PN**

The term passport yielded some positive connotations amongst employers, regarding personal ownership:

I think a passport is unique to you. So if it's about my needs and requirements then I think I'm likely to talk about ownership there as well you're seeing that individual has the ability to share that information about themselves. Then I think that is it just kind of defines it nicely. - **DM**

Conversely, other employers expressed the need for joint ownership of the passport. For example, specialist members of HR or experts can provide revisions or express previously unanticipated workplace needs within the document. It was suggested that a complimentary discussion with an expert could highlight any unanticipated or previously unencountered needs. For example, a student entering the workplace for the first time may have workplace requirements that they have never considered because they have limited experience in work environments where they may arise. For these needs to be reflected in the document, an initial meeting with an expert can ensure that such potential adjustments are documented. Providing expert advice can also mitigate placing sole responsibility of the AP contents onto the passport owner or the need for "*unilateral*" decision making.

A degree of holistic construction of the AP is necessary to address the diverse, rich, and complex requirements that are often largely unobservable in those without first person disability experience. However, autonomy and an enabling framework must operate in conjunction with an overarching consistent structure that signals authenticity to prospective employers. A balance must be ensured between autonomous creation of the

AP to respect the individual requirements of each passport holder and an overall verified, standardised model:

...is there a kind of vehicle that they have designed for this passport to sit on? Is it on a platform? Is it on a website, is it, how is it going to be? It's not on an app on a phone? Because that would be amazing obviously, but have they even thought about how this is going to be delivered? - **DM**

...it's [the AP] meant to belong to the disabled person, so it's not going to be on a platform. It's not going to be the shared somewhere they have consciously taken the decision that this would be an individual thing. - **GW**

Despite ownership of the passport belonging to the individual, large employers requested the addition of supportive guidance for the employer. Supplementary updated guidance or a supporting document to advise the employer how to navigate and use the passport effectively was highlighted as a necessary addition to the document itself. Requests were also made for an employer section within the AP to educate employers on how to utilise the document:

Is there any sort of supportive guidance for employers? I know the government has the employee line manager's guidance for discussing disability, but perhaps something that a, they will update that guidance in lieu of this [the AP] or would there be an accompanying document? Obviously this [the AP] belongs to the individual. But you know some counterpart for the employer at a local level. That would better educate how exactly to utilise the document - **TC**

The opportunity for a self-selection component within the AP was suggested, with the inclusion of requirement selection via a portal-based list. Individuals could self-select their preferences for a variety of needs, such as communication styles, as well as highlight what they perceive as their priority requirements. This feature could mitigate the need for extensive, repeated discussion and reassessment, as information could be quickly modified and communicated digitally by the passport owner:

I believe that that self-service option would integrate nicely with a passport. So whereby you'd have the selection of a particular product without even having the need for an assessment of needs. So you have

to select this down the screen what requirements you need what particular approach you may have... - **DM**

There was discussion surrounding the ownership of assistive technologies following purchase. For example, if the employer purchases an assistive technology on behalf of an employee, employers expressed confusion clarifying to whom the technology belongs. Ownership of technologies must be clearly communicated to avoid disagreement, in the event that an employee changes workplace and wishes to transport adjustments to an external establishment.

In terms of verification, the vehicle upon which the digital document is stored may impact the perception of the AP by employers. Distribution of the AP through a verified portal or app may relieve potential issues regarding employer recognition:

You would think that if it was a genuine platform, you've got university student coming out of university. So they could say that they are in receipt of DSA out of particular institution and that therefore would provide them with the kind of platform that they need to go into the world of work. So it's [the AP] not going to be like a piece of paper surely to goodness. It's not going to be a document, it's going to be something that's digital that they can then hand over. - **DM**

...especially thinking about maybe graduate students coming in, who for whom this might be their first time in the workplace and they're not sure if there's a sort of tool with a stamp of approval that they know they can use and the employers know to look out for, that could be a really good bridging point. - **FI**

It is crucial to avoid superfluous eclecticism at the expense of organisational recognition or anarchistic presentation/format that may override functionality. Standardisation must be harmoniously balanced with flexibility, as employers may alter the document to suit their specific organisational context:

It [the AP] has pros and cons. Obviously some people have said that's fantastic because I am confident I'll share the information only with the

companies I really wanted. Other people have asked well but how do you prove that this is genuine? - **GW**

3c. Alleviate barriers

The sub-theme “*Alleviate barriers*” reflects the ways in which pertinent information disclosure via the AP can prevent stigmatisation and overcome potential social barriers that may be otherwise encountered during employment. It was suggested that the greatest barrier to employment is not feeling supported by an employer or having the means to discuss reasonable adjustments within a business. Increased understanding can also change workplace culture overtime by cultivating empathy towards previously undetected barriers. An emphasis is placed upon passport accessibility and ease of use for both employers and the employee:

...the easier that we can make it for people to get help and for employers to actually not have a barrier there, get rid of that stigma as much as we can and just lessen the hurdles, lower the hurdles, you know, eventually eliminate them if possible. - **KB**

For example, the AP could be a valuable tool to encourage understanding around less visible, “*soft adjustments*.” Invisible disability requirements, such as communication preferences, may be perceived as less “*tangible*” or immediately understandable than observable or physical adjustments like assistive technology:

...we tend to find that people get the tangible stuff they understand. If someone needs a screen reader or an adjusted chair. But understanding that you might need to communicate differently with someone and this is how to do it, that's the kind of thing I think it could really help in terms of providing those in work adjustments. - **FI**

For the AP to provide a structure for inexperienced employers and build organisational confidence in supporting needs, clarification must be made to distinguish soft versus hard adjustments. For example, adjustments that are consistently necessary must be

distinguished from preferences or conditional requirements that may only arise in certain situations or at certain levels of disability/illness/condition severity. Those responsible for writing the passport must be responsible for clarifying these distinctions. One suggestion for the document structure is to comprise two sections: one with hard or necessary adjustments such as assistive technologies, and the other outlining how to best support the individual.

Upon becoming aware of invisible mental health concerns, such as anxiety, with consent from the employee, employers have previously spread an awareness of the illness within their team to “*prepare and notify*” them in advance that a new individual will require specific support from colleagues. Though completing tasks alone may amplify anxiety, the employer assumed that all applicants are prepared to overcome reasonable illness or disability constraints to complete work-based tasks. Therefore, immediate access to such information can be empowering to support employees in overcoming physical or psychological barriers that may otherwise occur in incompatible/insufficiently adjusted conditions:

So we had another member of staff that has an anxiety disorder and so she would feel uncomfortable. So we had somebody to support her and with her permission we don't notified of the staff members and NHS staff that you know from time to time keep checking on her so it helps us to prepare and notify people that need to be aware that there's somebody coming into the team that needs support. So you know this is really useful, especially if she's being put in the, you know, in the consulting room on their own, which might play on anxieties. But she's obviously prepared to what she wants to overcome them. Hence she's applied. But the point is, it's quite empowering for us and also for her to have everything in order from the get go, we are prepared to meet her needs - **RT**

It was emphasised that not all adjustments are disability related. While the terms “*passport*” and “*adjustment*” yielded positive connotations, it was expressed that the word “*disability*” could discourage neurodivergent individuals, those in need of psychological support, or employees who do not self-identify as disabled to seek workplace support.

Some employers have sought to normalise adjustments within the company by encouraging peer discussions and support. For example, employers were concerned that employees working through a probationary period were hesitant to express adjustment needs *“for fear of retaliation.”* In response to these concerns, one company initialised *“buddy schemes for new joiners”* to ensure employees feel confident and supported in discussing needs as early in employment as possible.

Consideration of commonly utilised assistive technologies, such as text to speech caused employers to call for a reevaluation of what constitutes “normal” ways of working. Furthermore, employers discussed the potential for adjustments for individuals who do not meet the clinical threshold for disability diagnosis but would nevertheless derive benefits to workplace output from alternative approaches to working:

I'm wondering if there's room to have a discussion around normal way of working which maybe sort of slightly different, but it might embrace the needs of more people who perhaps don't get a formal diagnosis or a formal assessment along the way, but still want to have their additional needs met. - **LU**

Inclusivity was considered dependent upon the employer’s commitment to address potential workplace inequalities. One example of a resourceful solution to allow employer inclusion was to facilitate joint working on projects. Joint working is one method through which organisations can avoid unnecessary discrimination or non-inclusion of individuals with additional needs when assigning employees to specific projects. Acquisition of adjustment information during the earliest stages of recruitment or project planning provides companies with the opportunity to assess their resources to allow for adjustments such as joint work on necessary projects:

Some of the tasks and responsibilities of the projects that we run but somebody with a particular disability may not be well suited to do themselves. So it all depends on the commitment that the employer has to addressing these inequalities. So in that setting, we would have people work together on certain programs. So we don't discriminate and stop that person from doing something that they are able to do, but just as a safety, we have somebody with them. So it's more around health

and safety. So you can have a joint working on certain projects and programs. So you're not excluding disabled people from certain activities where there is room to include them. And by knowing that in advance you can kind of look at your resource and decide what projects that person could potentially work on. - **RT**

Moreover, it was emphasised that the responsibility for alleviating workplace barriers is on the employer. Large employers unanimously agreed that businesses must make internal changes to accommodate additional needs, rather than expect solely the passport holder to change to suit their organisation. Integration of the passport itself requires a minor procedural and process change, which may lead to a level of apprehension within businesses; particularly those of a medium or smaller size. However, despite the potential for some negative reception, the employer considered the passport a necessary barrier for organisations to overcome, by forcing businesses to reflectively evaluate their own internal procedural weaknesses:

...it is employers that need to make the changes and I don't think **RS** disagreed with that for one second. But the simple idea of integrating a sheet such as this [the AP], you know its 2-3 pages in into your systems shouldn't be a difficult one. It's a slight change in process. It's a slight change in procedure And whilst we aren't talking about small and medium businesses, but that's the one that was highlighted, yes, there might be some pushback or panic on the back of that. But surely that's the better option that the onus should be on the business to acknowledge their weaknesses and to make more adjustments for themselves to put all employers on a standardized position with regards to dealing with an adjustment passport rather than the other way around than the onus is being on the individual. So whilst I acknowledged that might be a barrier for some businesses, I don't see the barrier as a necessary one that the individual should come up against it should be. For the business to overcome. - **TC**

The format of the document itself must also be accessible, comprising fonts and colour backgrounds that prioritise owner usability, as well as remaining functional for the employer. "*Accessibility features*" could also be highlighted to aid document navigation.

For ease of employer use, it was suggested that the format of hyperlinks within the passport are exchanged for URLs:

I was just looking at the access to work section within the document itself. And I note that a lot of these are just hyperlinks without the actual website URLs listed out and that might not be the best for everybody who is attempting to use this document so converting hyperlinks to URLs might be helpful. - **TC**

In terms of accessibility, employers considered the complex language used in some sections of the passport to be inaccessible or less suitable for younger age groups or individuals with difficulty comprehending convoluted explanations. For example, complicated or unclear wording used within the passport is considered inappropriate, especially for younger demographics. To resolve areas of the document where the core underlying message is unclear, “plain” clear English was deemed more accessible:

...and I think there's a few bits in there [the AP] that you have to read about two to three times before you actually get your head around it and how this is going to work in a practical workplace. - **GR**

I'm a bit unsure about the title as well. But also am just by the title, you know, just reading through the document. So for example, Section 2, where it's like my health condition or disability interacts with barriers within or at that opening sentence, especially for younger people. It took me like to read that twice just to absorb it. Actually, what is that? What is it actually asking me? So I think like, you know, like plain English, a bit more plain English for me will be better. - **AB**

Conversely, it was stated that the Passport could be improved, as it may be popular amongst a younger demographic but not older demographic. The addition of the pronoun “my” within the Passport title was also considered as having connotations of younger users, as opposed to adult workers:

I think it [the AP] could be improved. I think perhaps considering, you know, we are looking at younger people here, so maybe someone who is still of high school age, it might be appropriate, but obviously the front might be subject to change and the layout and things like that. So I'm not really going to comment on that, but I think possibly looking that this document might be something used very late on in someone's adult life. Maybe want to be a reconsideration of the name. Even the word my at the start to me makes it feel more you know very young centric and I would perhaps suggest something like adjustments summary or adjustments and needs requirements document or you know something like that that's maybe a little more. - **TC**

The passport is predicted to have a stronger uptake with graduates or younger generations, who are more frequently encouraged to discuss disabilities with others; particularly those that are "*non-visible*" in nature:

I was talking about this with one of my colleagues and we both felt that the passport would probably have a stronger uptake with younger individuals entering the workplace, who have been encouraged to talk more about disability especially from those non-visible disabilities as opposed to maybe uptake from people that have been in the workplace for some time that have not ever really discussed or disclosed a disability as a natural thing. And that might be a generation sort of piece in terms of where they've got to where they are today sort of things. So we were saying we think. Like we could see, we if in our apprenticeship applications, we could see we'd get quite a few of these used. But and we're thinking like for people who are already in the business or people joining us at maybe later stage in life, would it be as widely used that would just comment and observation based on opinion and a conversation. - **RS**

On the other hand, employers anticipate less passport use amongst adults who are already in the workplace. Though the document may effectively be used in apprenticeship applications, it will not be as widely used for those already in the business.

To encourage older generations to use the passport, it must be fully integrated into organisation's process:

I think the strength will be as it's [the AP] adopted I take **RS**'s point there in terms of by who could obviously in the university exception, we'd encourage them to use it, but who's encouraging everybody else to use the passport, and then once more use it, that organizations etc. adopt it in processes and integrate it throughout sort of their policies, I think would be it's true strength. - **HC**

Finally, the AP could enable employers to declare themselves disability confident by equipping them with the skillset and tools required to facilitate diverse employee requirements:

I think that this [the AP] is an opportunity for companies to think about becoming disability confident and will help them to work through the criteria that they need to meet in order to make that commitment and sign up to be a committed employer or leader and disability confident. - **LU**

3d. Life-long journey

As the passport is not a static document, the final sub-theme "*Life-long journey*" represents the AP as a "*living document*" that will "*evolve*" alongside its owner and their psychological or physical changes over time.

With consent of the passport user, it was unanimously and repeatedly suggested that the document support "*an interim or a periodic review*" process. Though unnecessary reassessment should be avoided, needs can vary in severity over time, from debilitating to dormant. Such variation should be reflected in the adjustments provided and coinciding documentation records. The passport would therefore be used to track changes in needs and support an ongoing, open discussion:

If I think about a logical process behind it, I see as it [the AP] as part of obviously with the individuals consent as part of an annual review process.

If you're a company that does conduct those. And to obviously the whole point of this is to avoid multiple assessments at every stage. But I do think it would be a key document for an interim or a periodic review. - **TC**

Uh, disabilities can be debilitating. They can be, changing over times, you know, dependent on what it is. So this would be a really good core document to sort of track those changes in needs and keep that conversation open. - **TC**

It's [the AP] not a static thing and it's something that the employee keeps with them as we all know, disabilities change and sometimes they may go through a period where they may experience a decline in their health and their wellbeing. But at other times they may experience an uptake and this document is very much there to support them on their journey. - **PN**

A periodic review would also support tracking needs during periods of transition to new environments within a company, such as building or home-based work changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

I think about the fact that we're moving buildings soon and you know we're going to be in a completely different environment. This [the AP] would be a great tool to help those people to transition into a new space, right? What's changed? Does that affect you? All of those sorts of questions? So I think it would be great with that person's consent to use on an ongoing basis. - **TC**

Just to follow on to **TC**'s point about the change in buildings that this would have been very useful. And how do we have had it two years ago? Because we closed the back of the pandemic. We had X regional offices around the UK. Then we had X and we went down to X and we closed. We closed several facilities and then the staff within those facilities. The majority of those employees, myself included, migrated home and work from home during the pandemic and now work from home permanently. So I work in a team of X people soon for X and I've not met. I've never met some of the employees that I work with and managing employees you've never met is really difficult, especially if you then add in things like disability and adjustments and requirements. So it will be so useful especially in this virtual world where we're not necessarily linked up like we used to be in physical workspaces to actually have a more formalized, if you moved into a

new team and you're not going to meet that team anytime soon. If you then had 12 people and three or four had disabilities and you had the passports and you could then work with them and look at the information in there, then I think as the workspace evolves things like this would be really useful. - **RS**

In addition to supporting employees through periods of transition, such as from education to the workplace as well as within or between organisations, it can also normalise awkward conversations surrounding workplace needs. Though it was stated that new procedures/documents always arrive with initial barriers or challenges to execution, time spent using the AP will allow people to become used to new processes and appropriate language use. Once workers understand how to use the passport appropriately, it will integrate into organisations more effortlessly:

So I've very recently facilitated transition of an employee between teams that has some very specific needs and I was able to do that and have the conversations and just based on the prior knowledge, but I don't think all the people potentially within the team would have been able to have those conversations. So yeah, I think it [the AP] would [help the disabled individual to change roles within an organization]. It just makes it a lot more easier and it normalizes the conversation rather than being an awkward conversation, I think that's the thing with the passport as it as with anything new, there's going to be issues and hiccups and barriers to its usefulness and execution. But with time, people get used to processes and get used to language around topics. And I think that that's when it becomes really easy to facilitate and once people understand it and know how to use it appropriately for things like moving internally it within a business. - **RS**

Though the passport is intended to support an individual throughout their career journey, the extent to which the term "*passport*" reflects this concept was questioned. Mixed reactions were given in response to the use of the title "*passport*," as it was claimed to not initially conjure thoughts of a lifelong journey but instead, an entrance/admittance to a singular destination:

Passport initially I think comes to mind as you go from one place to another, i.e. getting into the job but I think what **TC** said in terms of annual reviews, obviously appraisals, such lights and if it was about a passport for that career journey in terms of throughout your employment life, so within an organization, beyond an organization, into the next organization and through the next organization rather than just to passport into an organization, I suppose it's just something that hit me because, yes. You can travel from here to Dubai and then on to Sri Lanka, whatever and you can use your passport each time, but initially the first thought that comes to mind of a passport is A to B rather than A to B to C. - **HC**

Though the term "*passport*" yielded positive connotations of "*going somewhere*" amongst some, others claimed it to suggest "*barriers more than opportunity*" in the political context of "*the post Brexit era.*":

I'm quite positive about the title. I think it's a case of passport denotes a quite a positive undertone, you know you're going somewhere you're actually, it's not a Reasonable Adjustments Form and I was just about to say I quite like it actually I think it's positive - **GR**

Chapter 4. Focus group findings: disability support practitioners

The findings of the focus groups with disability support practitioners are presented below. A total of three main themes were generated and a summary of these are shown in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Summary of main themes (disability support practitioners)

Main Themes
1) Paving the way to conversation
1a. Conversation starter
1b. Participation on both sides for success
2) Empowerment
2a. Reducing anxiety: confidence leading to empowerment
2b. Empowerment through Individuality
2c. The difference between empowerment and entitlement
3) Accessibility
3a. Accessibility to all
3b. Name of the passport
3c. Improving accessibility

1. Paving the way to conversation

The first theme “Paving the way to conversation” discusses how the AP will encourage a conversation between a new employee and employer regarding any potential adjustments which may be required for the new employee to be able to fulfil the job role. The theme focusses on how the AP will encourage conversations but also highlights the need for the conversations to occur from both sides for conversations to be successful.

1a. Conversation starter

Disability practitioners commented that the passport would begin and aid a conversation with employers regarding a student’s disability and request of adjustments to be made. The first sub-theme “Conversation starter” highlights how the passport will allow conversations regarding a perspective employee and employer regarding disability and adjustments which may need to be required in the job.

It was acknowledged by disability practitioners that beginning a new job brings a new set of challenges which can be heightened if a new employee has a disability if they do not speak to the employer about what adjustments they need in the job role. Having the passport will allow the conversation to start and therefore break down barriers regarding disability:

This as a means to open up a conversation and break that barrier down so that the employee has a chance to actually put their side forward it, it is really needed. – **HP**

I can see that from an employer point of view it's a really useful document to have because it paves the way for being able to provide the support. – **QS**

To have something to be able to give an employer to start conversation is the way forward, definitely. – **HP**

Furthermore, the disability practitioners discussed how the passport, in addition to paving the way for conversations to begin between new employees with a disability and

employers, would also phrase the conversations in a positive manner focussing on what the employee can do and bring to the job role:

If the, it kind of provides something to say, I'm eligible for access to work, and here's a starting point for an access to work assessment. - **AD**

We talk in the team about the strength and aspiration model that very much looking at this passport, it's very much deficit model. What do you need? What can we do for you? And actually I think what would help the conversation is what are your strengths? What can you also already do? - **QS**

1b. Participation on both sides for success

As discussed, the disability practitioners overall felt that the passport would allow for a conversation about adjustments to job roles to occur easier. However, many individuals stated that how successful the conversations are about adjustments would be dependent on both the employer and the students/future employees. This second sub-theme "Participation on both sides for success" focusses how and why it is important for the students/future employees and employer to partake actively in the AP scheme:

I think if students do use it, I see it as a positive contribution because it just gets that conversation right up front, right at the beginning. But of course, it just relies on the confidence to use it. - **QS**

It's good, but it's fully dependent on the engagement of the leaver and so that's what will determine how useful and effective it is and also how much to, what extent it represents, the disability as you ask, because I can imagine in a lot of cases it would be difficult for a student to commit to sharing everything that could be in this document, but if they're willing to, and if they want to, it could be a very good and useful document and a very good representation and their needs but that's all dependent on what the student is willing to share. - **AD**

It was highlighted that the success of conversations would also rely on engagement with the AP scheme by employers:

I think employer engagement with this whole process is really important. - **AD**

Disability practitioners discussed ways in which employers could improve the chances of a successful conversation and reduce anxiety of perspective employees and at this point a two-tick scheme was spoken about. The two-tick scheme was discussed to not only be helpful towards the perspective employees but also for the company in recruiting future employees:

Employers say yes, we're part of it, so we're part of the passport scheme that lets the job seeker know oh this employer knows what a passport is and will accept it from me. And the employer will know we're ready to have a discussion about a passport. - **AD**

I really like the idea of having something similar to 2 ticks. So we know that, you know these employers are on board with it. - **QS**

I can envisage a time when you will get a stage where it becomes something and that's important for employers to advertise as part of their commitment to diversity and I think the two ticks scheme has been a success certainly in terms of encouraging disclosure early because and it's encouraged disabled job seekers to think this is a positive employer. - **AD**

2. Empowerment

The second theme "Empowerment" discusses how the AP will empower those who complete and use it. This theme highlights the ways in which the AP, when those who use it are fully informed, will give them confidence and feel empowered to use the AP to help them in a new workplace. The theme also acknowledges the individuality of the AP and how this can empower those who complete it. Finally, it is discussed how an individual who completes the AP, although may feel empowered and confident, does not give them automatic entitlement to what they have requested.

2a. Reducing anxiety: confidence leading to empowerment

The disability practitioners discussed that although students did give consent to complete the AP, they observed that the students were physically nervous and shared concerns about completing the AP. The first sub-theme "Reducing anxiety: confidence leading to empowerment" highlights how reassurance and full information disclosure to the students

about the AP will allow for students to feel confident about the usage of the AP and therefore have an increased level of confidence to have conversations with future employers about adjustments which may be required in the workplace. Students were particularly worried about how the passport would affect their disability pay:

This is an issue that students raised and one of the ones that I thought of when we were looking at it, which is just being clear that this, really early on, that this is only for either employment, if it's employment and work experience, what is it and that it's not gonna be cross referenced with the personal individual payments because this is something that students talked about but also in my experience that they...I shouldn't say they don't trust the government, but they're not sure how it's gonna be used. So yeah, being clear at the very start or somewhere how it's going to be used and not used. - **QS**

There is a fear for students that it might actually put them off their uptake of disabled student allowance if they feel that it's automatically going to be shared with an employer without them being able to opt out. - **EP**

Disability practitioners who had aided students to complete the AP discussed how there was a common theme of students being nervous to complete the AP as they did not know what would happen with the information. Although the passport is an individual document and owned by the individual who must give consent for information to be shared, this was not explicitly told to the student on completing the passport:

It's just think that people need assurances on, you know, the confidentiality, the information sharing. - **EP**

Sometimes people have assessments and they don't always understand what it's for, what it's about. So just to be entirely clear and transparent and possibly have regular reviews so that if they didn't understand last time they heard about it, they would, you know, have an opportunity to understand it a bit later on. - **DG**

Ultimately, the disability practitioners agreed that by fully informing the students on how the AP will benefit them, it would be possible to alleviate anxiety and increase confidence to empower the students to complete the passport and their education and use the passport as a tool with future employers:

What is this? What will it give me access to? How will my life be better because of it? That message needs to come across a lot stronger I think. - **EP**

I guess potentially it would be a good thing that it may encourage students who don't currently approach us with this need to engage with. - **QS**

Some students actually find it difficult to complete their last few pieces of work because of the fear of leaving almost in as much as it's difficult to start university, cause of the transitional elements. So this could help in that respect. - **GT**

2b. Empowerment through individuality

The second sub-theme "Empowerment through individuality" highlights how the AP can give the students the opportunity to express their disability in their own words and how it affects them daily. One practitioner described how two people could have the same disability but have different adjustment requirements, which with the individuality of the passport is able to be accommodated. With the passport being individual, students can ensure that they express their disability as they want to and disclose as much or as little information. In this way, students will feel empowered to use the AP because they have reassurance that it correctly reflects themselves as an individual rather than being placed into a box:

Not all students have, even though they may have the same diagnosis, they describe it in different ways and I think it's really important that students are able to describe it in their own ways and the way it impacts them - and that opportunity to describe more than one diagnosis, which I know it does. So yeah, I think that's useful. That's what is the most important thing that students aren't squeezed into a box and that there's not a one size fits all. - **QS**

Everybody is an individual and everybody is affected individually with different barriers or disabilities. So it's imperative that that part that individuals can capture what their disability is and how it affects them. Uh and what support is needed within either their work, you know, their life as a whole really. - **UV**

The fact that it's personalised is a great strength in itself because they can express, the individual can express how their disability affects them. - **OL**

2c. The difference between empowerment and entitlement

One issue that the disability practitioners identified and discussed was about what is meant by reasonable adjustments. The third sub-theme “the difference between empowerment and entitlement” focuses on the issue of the AP giving students empowerment and confidence to talk about adjustments by having the AP; however, the students need to be made aware that they are not entitled and will be guaranteed the reasonable adjustments that they request:

We’re identifying potential adjustments, we're not saying you're going to get this if you get yourself a job with this passport. - **AD**

Also kind of making it clear that it might not be met and I'm not trying to be negative. I'm just trying to be clear with the passport that we're, so that the students that are graduating here or gonna be on an apprentice course that they're clear about what this passport actually does, is it something that I would like as a reasonable adjustment, but I understand it might not be met or actually is this, you're putting it down so that the employer must meet it and this is one of the things that the students asked when I trialled it, if I put it down and the student and the prospective employer doesn't follow it. Umm, what does that mean? So it's actually been clear about the expectations on both sides. - **QS**

Disability practitioners highlighted that even if a student who is completing the AP currently received a reasonable adjustment in the past, the expectation should not continue that they will receive the same adjustment in their new job role. This will need to be conveyed through the AP’s accompanying literature and by university staff who help students complete the AP:

And as long as there's not an expectation that because they've had something in their primary school, senior school and even FE that they will receive it in HE because support is different, it's more about independent study and support is definitely there... but in a different guise sometimes. So for instance, electronic rather than manual and things like that. - **UV**

A university might offer a parking space to a student who doesn't qualify for the Blue Badge and so, the student might put that and think right, I'm gonna get a parking space at my next job. - **AD**

One individual counteracted the input of education of reasonable adjustments to students as they discussed that the reasonable adjustments should be created by the employer who should already have prior knowledge on how to create these:

I think it's true that in this day and age we would expect employers to be able to identify reasonable adjustments themselves based on their knowledge of what they need from their workforce rather than external people do that job so. - **AD**

3. Accessibility

The final theme of "Accessibility" focuses on how the AP can be accessible to all that who would benefit from using it. For the AP to be fully accessible, it is discussed how the types of adjustments should include not just physical disabilities. Furthermore, the name of the AP is discussed as to what name would make the passport the most inclusive and relatable to its aims. Finally, recommendations are made how to improve the accessibility of the AP focussing on layout and formatting.

3a. Accessibility to all

The disability practitioners felt that the AP would be a good way to improve accessibility to work, removing disability as a barrier. The first sub-theme "Accessibility to all" focuses on how the AP would make work accessible to all and the challenges which correspond with this:

I think if the passport becomes very normalized within the recruitment market then that's potentially a really good thing because employers eventually just get used to it, and that can be really beneficial for anyone with a disability going into the workplace. - **QS**

One suggestion from disability practitioners was to increase accessibility to all highlighted the need for an area in the AP where reasonable adjustments not relating to a physical disability could be made. By widening the type of reasonable adjustments which can be requested would in turn increase the accessibility of the AP:

I was just looking at all those adjustments and they're pretty much the bog standard ones, I would say for a lot of physical disabilities. I'm not seeing so much for the more subtle stuff. Would there be an opportunity to write something a little bit more specific to the student? - **HP**

Like the shift patterns - **HP**

As the AP has been created to be an accessible document, the disability practitioners suspected that there would be a large uptake by university students to complete the AP. The disability practitioners discussed concerns of resourcing including having fully trained staff. This was a concern because without the correct level of resourcing, this consequently would reduce the number of students who can be assessed to complete the AP; therefore, reducing accessibility and so the passport would inevitably not be accessible to all:

I have a slight concern that the passport because it feels a bit official we'd suddenly be expected to have more expertise than we do in this area, so from a careers and employability point of view, we can only ever talk in a general way because we don't have that expertise. - **QS**

The additional support to the team to enable these conversations to happen and I think it would require additional staff resource but certainly training umm to make sure everyone in the team was able to do it. - **AD**

I mean, we're experienced on the disability side, which is great, but you know it's maybe helping colleagues that don't have that hands on experience every day in their working lives. - **GT**

3b. Name of the passport

The second sub-theme "Name of the passport" focusses on whether the name "adjustments passport" is suitable for the name of this tool or if there is a better alternative to ensure accessibility to all. The term "passport" caused a divide between disability practitioners with some individuals seeing the positive in the term whilst other individuals found the opposite:

I like the idea passport because I think it gives the feeling of a journey. I like that and I like the movement. - **HP**

I think passport really does work as a more universal thing that everyone could kind of get used to and understand. - **AD**

I think my worry is the term passport because it implies that there are restrictions to certain places if you don't have it with you. - **EP**

It was agreed by the disability practitioners that the current name of "Adjustments Passport" did not fully explain what the passport was for and its outcomes. One suggestion to the name made by an individual included the word "employment" so that students would know that the passport is for future employment adjustments rather than adjustments at school or university:

Call it employment adjustments. And then everybody knows what it is. - **DG**

However, other disability practitioners felt that adjustments being in the name could lead students to feel like that they are guaranteed or are forced to have adjustments on completing the AP:

It might be, you know, they wanted to share that in case things come up but they don't actually need it, adjustments is kind of suggesting it's only for adjustments. - **EH**

Not calling it an adjustments passport because that that's gonna create that thing, oh, this is my adjustments that I'm gonna get. - **AD**

One disability practitioner following the discussion about removing the word "adjustments" suggested "access to work passport" in order to linking the aims of the passport to the name which would simultaneously inform students the role of the passport:

Maybe Access to work passport because it's about access to work. - **AD**

I think that access to work passport, I quite like that because moving away from that adjustment. - **HP**

In conclusion, the disability practitioners decided that there should be a change to the name of the passport for it to be appealing to students who may want to use the passport scheme. By making the passport sound more appealing it was thought that this would

likely increase the uptake of passport completion and therefore, increasing accessibility as more students access potential adjustments:

I do wonder if a rethink of what it's called, it might influence how it's thought about and the uptake of it. - **EP**

3c. Improving accessibility

The disability practitioners discussed that the formatting of the AP needed some changes being made. In the third sub-theme "improving accessibility" it will be discussed how to improve the accessibility of the AP to make it easy to understand by all who would like to use and complete it. The disability practitioners discussed the language used in the AP and felt that although the AP could be a useful tool, the language was too complicated and would make the AP inaccessible for some students to complete due to a lack of understanding:

They found the language quite a struggle, so it just wasn't plain enough. - **QS**

It doesn't get straight to the point. What are they asking me. - **QS**

I think for deaf students, particularly ones that sign, I think the way the document is worded might be a barrier. I think the English has to be a lot, um avoid saying things like 'impacts me' and that you know, it needs to be much more, sort of more like plain English. - **XL**

In addition, some disability practitioners felt that the AP had very useful information included but where it was located and displayed in the AP should be changed. By changing the location and formatting of the information, the disability practitioners expressed that the information would be easier to find for students completing the AP:

Need further help please contact us and we almost feel like that should be at the top rather than the bottom. - **EP**

So if the topics have their own sub-sections, it might be a little bit easier for communicating those struggles or challenges that they have and also to follow it visually, say somebody has... they require chunking when they need to read information and for us to locate it as well. - **OL**

Finally, a discussion of formatting changes to the AP raised issues relating to the colour of the text and links should be made. It was expressed by the disability practitioners that currently the format the AP is in would make it difficult to use screen readers as they would be unable to process the information correctly and so the student trying to complete the AP would be unable to do so. The issues with screen readers due to the passports current format would therefore reducing the accessibility of the passport and so changes have been suggested to counteract this:

So things like the shadow around the words so that, sorry, the stroke around my adjustments passport, for example makes it harder to read. And the contrast between the blue and the white? - **EP**

So the best thing that we found is black text, sanserif text on a white background...then the person can put an either a screen overlay, they're doing it on a computer or a physical overlay if they're printing it out and that way it doesn't distort what they're reading. - **EP**

So the links being that different colour again they're an issue. So if I was a blind student using this... I wouldn't know that that was a link because it would just read what it says, so you can find a list of occupation at standard... I wouldn't necessarily know that there was a link there, so need to say at this link and the link would need to say what it is and it needs to be a darker colour, so it's fine for it to be a slightly different colour to the main body text. - **EP**

Summary

The AP was discussed by disability practitioners to be a useful tool in encouraging conversations between a new employee and employer regarding any potential adjustments that may be required for the new employee to be able to fulfil the job role²⁰. Disability practitioners viewed the AP as an empowerment tool to new employees entering the workplace and discussed the benefits of the AP being an individual document. This individuality allows the AP to be accessible. However, although the AP is accessible, the disability practitioners made some recommendations, particularly changes to the formatting and to possibly consider the name of the document to increase accessibility.

²⁰ The Association of Managers Of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE) held its annual conference in July 2022. As the survey and the Focus Groups' meetings were completed by then, it became possible for the initial results to be shared with managers sector wide. This resulted in rich feedback that added insight to what was already collected back from students, disability practitioners and employers.

Chapter 5. Focus group findings: disabled students

The findings of the focus groups with final-year disabled students are presented below. A total of 15 main themes were generated and a summary of these are shown in Table 10 below:

Table 10: Summary of main themes (disabled students)

Main Themes
1) Initial impressions
2) Raising awareness
3) Promoting EDI
4) Versatility
5) Facilitating entry into work
6) Facilitating the adjustments conversation
7) Feasibility of adjustments
8) Scope for AP misuse
9) Disclosure of AP and disability
10) Stigma and withholding information
11) AP name
12) Tangibility and credibility
13) Structure, formatting and terminology
14) Customisation
15) Further help and guidance completing the AP

1. Initial impressions

Students were unanimously positive towards the idea and rationale behind the AP. They liked the fact that it belonged to them and that they had ownership and control over the information in it and who got to view that information. They viewed it to be a step in the right direction and were strongly optimistic that the AP would help them enter work and employment:

It's exciting that there's going to be a provision for people with disabilities whereby we have a passport. It helps us to get into employment, but also, it's a passport that we can keep. It seems to be a passport that we can keep throughout our working life, and it prevents us from repeating the same things about the same information repeatedly if we have to change employers. Still, I feel these documents would help employers implement any adjustments. And to work with them according to our disability. – **SE.**

Students liked how the AP acted as an occupational plan, a risk assessment, and an adjustment plan all rolled into one document:

Like having an occupational health plan when they ask you questions about your health and how long it's been. When did it start, and what adjustment plans? Like a second risk assessment or thing? The passport states what conditions and adjustments you need – **AH.**

The utility of the AP led to the suggestion that rolling out this document at an earlier stage to secondary school students would help to build-up a more comprehensive and connected system that supports individuals throughout their education and beyond:

Maybe it gives us some hope that if they're doing this in Uni, something else will come out, a new scheme for high schools and stuff to support them, and maybe we could slowly strengthen the chains that we're lacking at the moment. – **MM.**

While students could see the AP's strong potential to encourage and support them in the workplace, there is the possibility that some AP users may feel some embarrassment or discomfort around the use of the document:

It may make people feel embarrassed to a certain degree that they have an official document, but it might empower some people. – **DR.**

2. Raising awareness

Students also felt the AP had strong potential to serve as an educational tool that would help employers to learn about individuals with disabilities, to help dispel prejudicial attitudes, and to underscore that they are equally capable in the workplace:

My passport is a good way to open people's eyes; we are just as capable as everybody else. – **MM.**

You're giving the employers the support to support me, which I think is good, and just being able to put myself out there like this is what I've got. But I have got this adjustments passport which will have these requirements, and it will help you to help me, and I think it will just provide that connection and communication. – **MM.**

It would be a positive. I think it will start magnifying things for the disabled. They might have autism, but they are maybe so clever that they are good with numbers. They can come up with something as quick as easy because I find that everybody has weaknesses, but everybody has their strengths, and if you can find a job that uses your strengths, then I think you're flying places. – **MM.**

When you have different medical conditions or, as you know, it's not common. I think the passport will probably help move that barrier. – **AH.**

I think it just it's educational as well for the employer. Yeah. Because you know what your disability is, and you know your limits, but they don't. So being able to explain that to them in document form and know exactly what to do with it to get you the support you need. – **DR.**

They could see the AP's potential to raise awareness of disability not only in the workplace but in society in general, with one student equating the AP with the hidden disabilities sunflower, which is a globally recognised symbol for hidden disabilities:

I remember the sunflower lanyard. If more people use it, then more people know why we use it; that's when that becomes a normal thing in our daily life things get easier. Uh, yeah. But if we are only a few people who use that, then yeah, first, no one knows that. – **MC.**

Students worried that they might be perceived by employers to be a financial burden, which might count against them in the recruitment process, especially if employers believed that any adjustments would have to be funded at their own expense:

Having this passport will give the employers confidence to know as well as with finance because some of these jobs don't have the funding to be able to support people with wheelchair access or IT issues because some programmes cost. – **MM**.

Students felt that a major advantage of the AP would be the reassurance knowing that potential employers would be made aware that financial assistance provided via the Access to Work scheme was available to them:

This passport will be good because obviously, having this passport I can say to employers well, actually it's worth having me. You get this money and can use it to support me. – **MM**.

The AP could potentially increase the number of Access to Work grant applications as both students and recruiters alike would become more aware of what support and assistance is available in the workplace:

It's never occurred to me that I could, you know, apply for assistance to, you know, for travel, to get to work, and so it made me think, I need to investigate what Access to Work provides me with my disability. – **SE**.

3. Promoting EDI

Students saw how the AP is an important step forward in promoting greater equality, diversity and inclusivity in the workplace by creating greater opportunities for individuals with disabilities. They felt that the general acceptance and widespread use of the AP in the workplace would change the world of work for the better, which in turn would provide an important source of encouragement for disabled students to pursue these opportunities:

[The AP] Sort of show[s] that they are being diverse because I think showing somebody that you're diverse, I think it attracts more people will go in this company. – **MM**.

We have a manager or CEO that's got this, this and this [referring to disabilities]. You can come and join our teams. I feel like the more diverse you are, the more sort of on the market and how better you look. – **MM**.

The initiative led students to feel that they were being recognised and supported by the government, like “someone is fighting [their] corner”, which in turn would help shape employers’ attitudes towards disabled individuals for the better:

Makes me feel like the government is starting to look at us as people instead of constantly looking at us negatively, and I think it will help employers to see that because I feel like the world is real. – **MM**.

It sounds more positive than I think it helps to shine the light on people with SENs. And I think it helps to give them the courage to say, well, somebody is fighting our corner. Somebody is there for us and slowly but surely making a difference. – **MM**.

As an official government document, the AP could help create a stronger working relationship between government, employers and disabled employees, thereby helping to drive workplace equality and diversity:

There will be a better connection between the government, employers, and employees. I think it'll provide that strong connection between everybody in the company. – **MM**.

Students thought that the AP would help employers to look beyond their disability and see their potential instead:

I want it [the AP] so once you're in there, it allows you to build that connection with the employers to say, well, this is what I've got, but this is what I can do. – **MM**.

This will empower me even more to apply for jobs because sometimes I am concerned about talking to managers about my disability and how they will view me. Would they think I can't do the job, as I've mentioned earlier? I feel as though, to be honest, I feel that having the passport would give

me more of a chance to gain employment than if I didn't have it, I guess, and particularly because it's from the Department for Work and Pensions.
– **SE.**

Students worried that having a disability would lead employers to underrate their capacity to perform well in their job role. The AP could potentially help counteract these negative assumptions, creating a firm basis for a positive dialogue focusing on what students could do rather than on any limitations they may have:

I find that some employers judge you first well, she has this, and she has that. So, she's not going to be very good at this. She's not going to be very good at that because they don't give you the chance to be able to see that your full potential because you've got, she's got this like she must be thick so she can't write an essay, or she can't write a document properly. In contrast, once I've got my foot in the door, I could show them that I have this disability but don't let it define me. – **MM.**

I think it'll be easy because having this passport when going to interviews, I've got this, and I've got that, I feel like going into an interview and going well I've got ADHD, I've got Dyslexia ... I feel like you're falling down the list of being accepted. Whereas I have an adjustment passport, the last job supported me this way; this is how you can support me. – **MM.**

So, it makes you as an individual feel more comfortable.... that you're, the person that's employing you knows your condition and how, like how they're gonna adjust and support you, that'll also be stated. I thought that was very helpful and having the passport. – **AH.**

The AP will provide important support and help its users to feel less “isolated” and more “included” in the job market and workplace by helping them to overcome some of the “challenges” they face and breaking down “boundaries” between disabled and non-disabled individuals:

Yeah, I think ... you know, not to, you won't feel isolated. I'm not sure about other, obviously other individuals that are disabled themselves. But you feel a bit more included, if you like, you know the access to work adjustments and the passport. It's like hand-in-hand alongside things that will help us reduce our challenges. I wouldn't say completely as I'd like, you know, completely take away all of our challenges, but this will reduce some of them in some cases. – **AH.**

I feel like it's good because it even gives you extra support. – **CK**.

It breaks the boundary between like, you know, disabled and non-disabled individuals, it basically just says you know because obviously like there's like a small amount, say, disabled people that go into work because you know what, for whatever reason, so it just helps us a bit. – **AH**.

4. Versatility

Students also felt that the AP was sufficiently versatile to accommodate any changes in their job-related duties (and therefore adjustments) over time. Students may not be fully aware of their capabilities and limitations until they have actual experience of what a particular job role entails, and so the AP will also assist both students and employers in making any necessary adjustments:

I've had duties where I didn't ... I wouldn't have thought that having my disability would have affected me being able to carry out these duties until I'm given these duties, and then I work in a place where it's forever changing. I'm always adding different duties so that I can change my passport as my job role changes. – **DR**.

It will help them adjust targets because that's what happened to me in the past. But I've had to fight for it, to get my targets reduced and in line with them because I guess it's hard to work out for employers how they adjust targets. The fact that I've had to fight for that means that with this document, I wouldn't necessarily have to do that because of the document's strength, I feel. – **SE**.

Students understood the AP to be a fluid and ever-evolving document that they would modify throughout their careers. It is especially helpful for those with disabilities that need to be regularly updated in line with the owner's current condition and adjustment needs. Students saw the AP as a beneficial resource that could assist in other areas of their career, not just to gain employment. Students felt it would be something that they could use in the workplace, adapting and changing the content as they become more experienced both in the workplace and in their understanding of their required adjustments:

It's an ongoing document that you can add to, edit, and change, so if your disability changes or notices it affects you differently, you can add that. – **DR.**

I feel this may have a positive impact, but I wonder how to use it in an umm suitable way to make these things even better because we fill in this form we don't want to it only use, the, in the initial three months, then in the future we would not use it. So that would be a waste of this passport. So I think if we can do something too. I don't know how. I just want to say we can use this passport for the long term instead of the short term. – **MC.**

5. Facilitating entry into work

Students unanimously felt that the AP would facilitate their entry into work by simplifying the recruitment process and making it more straightforward:

I would say yes. I feel like if everything's on one document, say one PDF file, it's much easier for them to look at it quickly. Also, you have all the conditions just in case of... you know, forget one or like you know, we need to update medical condition after like, is much more useful. Umm yeah, it would just help speed up the process. – **AH.**

Students stated that the document displayed their adjustments as a single uniform document that they are then able to share with different departments and organisations, which would save time and duplication of effort. The AP covered a lot of relevant information in a small space and would be much better than what happens currently where they are asked to provide multiple documents from different parties. Students felt that the AP has the potential to speed up the process of putting the necessary adjustments into place, as it would help to reduce the manifold assessments and different stages that they may repeatedly go through to gain the necessary support:

I feel like it ... it's just an easier way for me to discuss everything. If everything's on one document, I can just send it to like occupational health or like, you know, my line manager. Anything for like, you know, like any because much easier to discuss with people. – **AH.**

It's the constant not having to keep telling everybody, like when you go from one job having to keep telling everybody and having this passport.

It's all written down. You don't have to keep explaining it. You can just give it to them and let them read it. – **MM**.

You do not have to repeat yourself. – **DR**.

When I discuss my long-term medical conditions or my, you know, diversity, it takes a while, and I have to physically like, have to verbally explain everything in detail. It's quite uh, for me, I find it annoying or like it takes is time-consuming. – **AH**.

I think that's [the AP] the most ingenious thing ever because I'm sick and tired of having so much paperwork and just giving it to them like I give, like so much paperwork. So, I sort of get annoyed by sending seven letters to them after sending a whole 24 diagnosis report. If it was like, sort of like invitation because every time you have a new person, you have to send them the latest documents and then you have to like get up to date documents. So, I feel like this will probably help reduce the paperwork I have to send them for different medical conditions and diagnoses. – **AH**.

So, if you were applying for access to work, you couldn't necessarily have this passport, then you'd have to supply all this evidence of your disability to them. Whereas this passport is supposed to act as the evidence that being supplied to them could speed up the process to get you the things you need in work, I think the two combined. Yeah, it would speed things up. It would help. – **DR**.

So many stages or like circles that you must go through to get the support sometimes. – **MM**.

For example, one student felt confident that the AP would reduce her need to go to the doctors or other medical professionals to gain proof of her condition:

If it's like, certified by the government, I feel, I feel more protected by the government sort of thing, than just me getting letters from like you know, because like, you only have a certain period of time you can give your hospital letters to them, as you know, do you have up-to-date hospital letter. You get tired of going to your GP again for like confirmation. So, I would be quite grateful if the government approved, so that's quite good. – **AH**.

Similarly, the AP would help to better prepare employers in advance of any commencement of employment, as they would have access to the AP user's adjustments needs, giving them the time to organise any necessary arrangements that would need to be put in place:

I feel it would probably speed things up because from the get-go, they have the documents, and particularly if they were able to, like DR said able, to give it in at the interview stage or the stage of acceptance, then it gives them enough time to decide on what reasonable adjustments, give them the time to put in the reasonable adjustments and if some reasonable adjustments take longer than others. It helps them to think about, OK, what task or role or responsibility we would give this person with this particular disability in the meantime while we're waiting. – **SE**.

The passport would kind of like strengthen the in-house support that you would need and because a lot of times, I'm dyslexic and it's a hidden disability, so when I go to my employers and say like, I'm dyslexic, a lot of the time my line manager who is the first point of call won't quite know where to send me or what kind of direction to point me in where I work to get that support and help. So, I think having that passport. They would know exactly right, OK, we've got this document. It specifies everything we would need you to have to point us in the right direction to gain the support you need. – **DR**.

6. Facilitating the adjustments conversation

The AP would help students confidently express themselves in the workplace:

Helps them [employers] to see us as unique people and give us the opportunity as well as we can have the confidence, but also because of this scheme coming out, it sort of gives me the confidence to say, well, hang on a minute, if the government have put it in place, maybe they're seeing something that us guys aren't seeing and it will be able to say we're, I have these needs. I'm equal to everybody else, and it will bring up being equal and diverse. – **MM**.

Students could clearly see the benefits that the AP would have in enabling them to communicate their adjustment needs in a personal and explicitly clear manner:

Having hearing aids having like signs and stuff, because I'm using X, as well as lip-reading so maybe make them aware that obviously sort of how quietly even with my hearing aids on, I don't hear it. Hearing aids don't pick up every word they've said quickly enough, so sometimes I have to sort lip-reading to fill in the blanks. So, it'll be nice to sort of allow them to say when you're speaking to MM, please make sure it's loud and it's clear so that she can pick up with the mouth movements that she can lip read as well as the hearing aids pick it up as well. – **MM**.

The AP could create a mutually beneficial dialogue in relation to the adjustments needs conversation with employers, helping to remove any ambiguity, anxiety and embarrassment students may have when asking for their adjustment needs to be put in place:

Some people just suffer in silence because they're scared to stand up and say, well, this is what I need, and I should have the same opportunities as everybody else. You're not giving me that opportunity. – **MM**.

The AP would facilitate potentially difficult conversations when negotiating adjustments, as the document underscores its user's requirements and that financial support can be put in place to support these changes:

So, I think having that money allows the employees to say this is what I need, but if they give me the money, I can have it put in, and I think it makes a better conversation. – **MM**.

The AP would also help to reduce any discomfort felt by employers and give them the confidence to discuss the employee's adjustments, to ask questions and clarify understanding as well:

Suppose there's something that they don't understand. In that case, it will give them the confidence to ask me and say because sometimes you feel like when you need something you find a bit uncomfortable with that sort of if you don't mention it, somebody else does and they come to you; it might feel better if like they are, they've offered this, or they want to know more. – **MM**.

The AP may also benefit those students who would be shy or uncomfortable talking to employers about their disability and adjustment needs. Having the AP potentially could help to circumvent potentially awkward or difficult conversations as the document can do the 'talking' for them instead:

It literally sets out everything you're faced with, which is good on the actual person's side. That's what I feel like; overall, I like it; you don't have to repeat yourself and stuff like that cause it is embarrassing, and you most likely will hide some stuff. – **CK**.

[I] feel like it means the initial awkwardness for the person and makes you more comfortable because the person, the employer, already knows what you have, so all you need to do now is just add a face to it. I feel like it breaks you like, you know, it just breaks it down. So, you can have like, you don't need to be scared anymore because they've already done it for you kind of thing. – **CK**.

It's specific. It's much easier too. I find it easier to write it down than speak because I've got the words in my head, but I can't get them out. They have it written down, and somebody reading it would probably be much easier to explain exactly what each of my disabilities is and how it affects me in the workplace. If they needed to go into detail and discuss it further, then the basics of that information are already there. – **DR**.

I think it's a document, so it gives the people the confidence that I don't have to sign [BSL] anything. I can just let the passport do the talking and sort of it could build that connection, and I think that's what the struggle is at the moment. – **MM**.

One student reported that she did not like talking about her disability with strangers and found that disclosing her personal disability to interviewers of the opposite sex to be an uncomfortable experience. She was pleased that the AP would help circumvent this issue, helping to reduce her sense of vulnerability and creating a more relaxed discussion:

But I guess for someone who has a personal disability and, you know, they may feel the same way that I did. And in that, you know, it was hard to, as a female, to explain the disability to a male, but with this document, you know, I guess you don't even have to. – **SE**.

If the employer already has the AP prior to a job interview, then they can research the condition / adjustments in advance to become more knowledgeable about the individual's requirements. This may potentially help to overcome any barriers and allow for a stronger connection at interview when they have their first face-to-face contact with the employer:

It removes that initial shyness because that's what they already know about you, if you included that in the passport So instead of having conversations like, oh yeah, I have this condition, you can say, OK, I've seen

on the passport, it's something like that is normal because they've already seen it kind of thing ... sometimes employers might, employers might not know the condition, so you say oh this is the condition, this is what happens then... whereas if they have the passport they can already do some research prior if they didn't know what that condition is. – **CK**.

7. Feasibility of adjustments

Another concern related to their perceptions around the feasibility of their adjustment requirements in certain job roles and if this would prevent students from entering those type of jobs. Students worried that in some cases adjustments may not be possible simply because of the nature of the job role or work environment and its demands:

I think it also depends on whether or not it's feasible. That would be what we we're talking about earlier because, in some workplaces, it's not necessarily possible to work remotely or leave to go to a medical appointment or something like that. It could be very high-stress environments, or you could be dealing with patients or clients that sort of requires that you are very much present in that, or require you to go to a different venue, for example, so I think it depends on the type of work you are doing as well. – **JM**.

No, I'm good. I think it's not sure if it's going to help me maintain a job. That similarly depends on what field I go into, but it is hopefully going to be to make my time in the workplace more enjoyable and or liveable because it will make it easier to be in. This again depends on the type of workplace you end up in because they're not all as accepting of people who can't do things the way they can or are neurodiverse. – **JM**.

8. Scope for AP misuse

Some students expressed concerns about the potential for misuse or abuse of the AP document to screen out those disabled users needing adjustments from the job selection process. These students feared that if the AP was shared during the recruitment phase some employers might potentially question the capability of the AP holder or view the adjustments as a burden they could do without:

We could pass this information and particularly at the recruitment stage. They decide, you know what, I can't be bothered with implementing all

those reasonable adjustments or question the capability of whether the person with the passport can do the role with their disability. So that's the only niggling thing that I have in my mind. – **SE**.

I was just worried about maybe the stigmas caused by having this passport on you and maybe the support in ways being overlooked. I tend to be over-onerous though and wouldn't it, at this point, when the passport is in place be legally required to respect it and put it in place? – **MP**.

One student was concerned that they perhaps had “too many conditions” that if listed (as adjustments) on the passport could make them appear to be less desirable or less employable than other candidates who have similar levels of qualifications but don't have disabilities:

I feel a bit more worried about it because if it's physically listed for me, I feel like I have too many conditions. As funny as it sounds, it assumes it's problematic for me because I have this learning problem. I have these, you know, physical conditions. I've so and so conditions. Now I feel a bit worried that employers will be like, you know this person has a bit too many conditions like you know this is going to sound rude... Can we have like someone that doesn't have like you know, can we have someone that doesn't have all these conditions so don't have to adjust for them sounds rude, but you know I think that's why sort of thing because when I have long term conditions I get worried that you know, other people probably have like you know, maybe the same grades as me, but then, you know, they have less medical conditions than me. Sounds a bit sad, but yeah. – **AH**.

9. Disclosure of AP and disability

Students approved of the AP's positive focus on adjustments rather than their disability. The important issue of when to disclose their AP was raised throughout the focus groups. Students expressed a range of personal preferences around when to disclose their AP to potential employers. Students understood that they can use their own judgment when the best time would be to share their AP with employers. Some students were reassured that the AP would help by providing a structure or scripted guide helping them tackle the discussion about adjustments from different angles:

For some people ... it's [their disability and AP] a private matter. So, as I said earlier, it would be an advantage to send it beforehand. Still, some people may not want to do that, so that could reduce their confidence if that makes sense because what I mean depends on the person, I suppose. Still, I suppose there are ways around it because I just thought if it was the case that they didn't want to go into detail about what they were happy to declare that they had some sort of disability, they could say the evidence available upon request. – **DR.**

I would only share it [the AP] with those I felt needed it. And that's so if I'm working with colleagues and we are the same, we have the same job role. I don't necessarily feel they would need to have it, but my line manager or HR may. So, I'll be able to have that power to choose who it goes to as well, I think. And have a lot of comfort in that as well. – **DR.**

The AP would also help to alleviate the pressure some disabled students felt that they needed to justify or prove that their disability was real, especially for those with 'invisible' disabilities like mental health issues:

For me, it strengthens. Because my experience in the past is kind of proof, I guess that's an inverted comment to 'prove' that I have a disability. It [the AP] strengthens because if I can add detail to the document about my disability, then because it's of a personal nature, I wouldn't need to explain myself away. – **SE.**

Because my disability is personal and because it's a hidden disability, these documents would be really important to me, I feel. It would boost my confidence because it would prove that even though I shouldn't have to, it would prove that straight off from the get-go, it will prove that I have a disability and that I would need reasonable adjustments to be made. And so, for me, it would be a great tool. – **SE.**

If I was to go to my employer and just say I'm just Dyslexic, can I have sufficient support? It's just word of mouth. It would take a longer process, whereas as an official document there, it gives them that push to kind of move it along a little bit. – **DR.**

Some students stated that they would prefer not to disclose their diagnosis / disability in the first instance, focusing on the support they required in order to do their job effectively instead. They expressed that they would consider disclosing the nature of their disability once they felt familiar with their work environment and that they could trust their employer:

If I were to use this passport, I would focus more on the actual effects [of my disability] and not on what makes these things happen because the results are much more tangible, and that's also what the passport is asking for. So, I sort of was in a position where I think that the passport could be very, very helpful in a very structured way of sort of addressing my needs and the needs of other people in the workplace, even if it is more geared to people with visible disabilities, which I slightly agree that it is. – **JM.**

I'm not sure if I would say what it is [my disability]. Still, I would probably be very open to what I need to do the job to the best of my abilities, so I would keep it on effects and not so much on what it is, at least in the beginning, until I know the structure in this sort of support in place, the culture at the workplace, essentially. – **JM.**

10. Stigma and withholding information

Students expressed concerns that the nature of their disability would be perceived negatively by potential employers with some disabilities regarded to be more 'acceptable' than others. This was especially the case with those who had a less visible disability like mental health issues. The stigma surrounding certain conditions led some students to suggest they may withhold, downplay or "hide" some disabilities to avoid any potential negative repercussions:

I may keep something not very open. Uh, right to fill in this form because I worry about some people putting the stigma on me or they think I'm a troublemaker. That would make me lose this opportunity to get the position or even something else. So I have two diagnoses and may close disclosure one instead of the other because I think one is much more stigma than the previous one. So that is my experience, and I will keep something not uh open, have open-minded. Feeling this? No, but I hope in the future I can do so. So that is why we do this for the group, I guess. – **MC.**

Example details that might make you look less than your other employees. For example, if you said...um but let's say you read, you can read, but you need to grasp things slowly. Yeah. It's like, very slowly but you will get there in time. So you might say, you might discard that and just say I just need a little bit more time, but you will not tell them that. Look, it's like a condition like I need lots of time to grasp things. When you tell me something in the workplace, that's an example. – **CK.**

Some people contact the disability service. Contact me to try to provide something. They can provide the resources, but I feel they may not be familiar with this issue. It depends on whether I have two diagnoses of the mental problems, then one is more acceptable, and one is that some people may feel that the term is terrible. So, for example, give me a specific example when we say, " Oh, this person is suffering from depression, " so the general thoughts may think, " Oh, this OK, just feel down. – **MC**.

Umm. I 100% agree. If I had this passport, as sad as it sounds, I'd probably hide some of my medical conditions because I don't have life-threatening ones. I have multiple different conditions that can affect me at different points. So, as you know, if I have a flare-up, I wouldn't suggest other medical conditions that cause these flare-ups. So like if I stated all my, like all my conditions, they're like, oh yeah, this person's off for this flare-up, for this person's off for this type of flare-up, now, like, you know, they'll be like, she you know, she's having all these conditions. – **AH**.

I think this passport has had a positive impact. Umm, but I, in the employment, I think it also depends on the environment. So for me, I can choose academic work or clinical work. If I do academic work, I think it's easy to use this passport or disclosure because that is not directly related to my ability. My ability for academic work is OK. Even though I feel depressed or something, I can still do something or remotely something, but if I do the clinical work, that means I need to go to the work field every day. I feel that environment, if I, or the position type, if I disclosure too much, that may be not very good, that is, or even you mention maintain the intended position? Umm. Not quite, uh, confident to use this passport in some specific types of positions. – **MC**.

Because the AP is an official government-backed document, it would serve to reinforce the importance of workplace adjustments and the "duty" of employers to provide this support. The AP therefore creates a sense of security and helps to allay students' fears around being treated unfairly because of their disability and adjustment needs:

Having a disability can feel like you fall below the rest of the population. The Passport shows the adjustments put in place and hints that other employers are helping. This creates peer pressure for the employers to be seen as doing the right thing. – **MM**.

Speaking from experience, it would be a superb tool because I have been dismissed based on trying to get my disability rectified. – **SE**.

I would say that it would strengthen our case to stay at work because it's a written document, it's from the DWP, and it will put upon the employer that they have a duty of care to ensure that they make reasonable

adjustments so that people who've got disabilities can perform our tasks.
– **SE.**

It would speed up the process, as she says they already have that document. The fact that it's a DWP document has the weight to it to say right. We need to get this sorted sooner rather than later. – **DR.**

11. AP name

The name 'Adjustments Passport' was positively received by the students who felt that its name was well-suited for its purpose. They approved of its focus on adjustments rather than their disability. Adding the term "Passport" to the title was well-received and many students felt that the name sounded neutral, unbiased, and positive. There was the belief that the name was clear, straight to the point and carried no negative connotations. There were a lot of positive comments with one student liking that the word "disability" was not used:

Yeah, it's something like, very neutral. Not very biased. So, I think this is a good term. It is in my sense of English. I think that is a good thing. – **MC.**

It feels like a very sort of neutral name for a document that's not necessarily going to imply anything until you go through it, or if you're not necessarily familiar with it, and I also think it's easier again to deal with the adjustment side than the actual Disability side. Hopefully, I think it's more palatable and less stigmatised, but that could just be me having that impression. – **JM.**

I like that. I like the actual name because it doesn't scream at you. Oh, something weird is inside of this, like uh, then I have to think, it's very...It's a very hidden name. I didn't mean like it's... not hidden. I... What's the word for it? It's like, no, not obvious. It's like, yeah, very so kind of thing. – **CK**

The subtleness helps. It's better than being called a disability plan or something like, you know, a medical condition plan. It's not really. It just feels, it feels more inclusive. I like the word AP. It doesn't give, like a strong, harsh-sounding thing. So like, you know on like work placement forms, like university forms that say do you have any disabilities or long term conditions, but it doesn't feel very nice to say. Well, not nice. I don't know how to say it, it's just, and it feels a bit more different, so the adjustment plan seems more inclusive. Hopefully, that makes sense. – **AH.**

12. Tangibility and credibility

The credibility that stemmed from the AP as an official government-backed document that neatly and succinctly summarises their adjustment(s) needs in one document gave students confidence by creating a tangible and legitimate basis for adjustments conversations or performance management meetings. Using the AP will enable students to be more forthcoming and confident in their adjustment requests, making it easier for employers to provide the appropriate care and support:

I don't think there are any disadvantages at all. I think it would be a great help. It would be a great help for me to have the passport to use it, particularly because it's something that the DWP introduces and gives it credibility. If that makes sense, it will empower me. I feel to be confident enough to go for an interview with my condition. – **SE**.

I hope that it will be helpful because it gives you sort of the, or at least would give me the confidence to ask for adjustments in a productive way that is tangible and easier to accommodate than if I just go in and be like, oh, I have this condition which tells you nothing about how it affects my day-to-day or how it might affect the adjustments that I would need to perform the job well, so hopefully it will have a positive impact because it would be or because it is so tangible. Umm, so yeah, hopefully, a positive impact on our ability to get employment. – **JM**.

I think it would have a positive impact because it's so. The document itself is not concrete. Still, it sort of forces you or encourages you to be concrete as to what issues you have, what adjustments you need, and it's very tangible, which I think most employers would be sort of not grateful for it, but happy with it because if you go in you have to ask, then you have a good reason for it, it's more difficult to question, why is this important? Why do you need this? It's easier for them to agree and provide support, and I think it would make the situation easier for both employers and people coming into the workplace. So, I think it's, I think it would be, at least for me, pretty encouraging. – **JM**.

If the student was not satisfied with the support offered by their employer, the AP also provides a firm foundation for them to further negotiate their adjustments or even raise an official complaint:

Then I feel like you would be justified if you would, for example, open a complaint from the employee side of you because you can say you've actually shown it to them on this day and look at when everything was

completed. So, you could actually complain to like, you know, the complaints department. So yeah. – **CK**.

13. Structure, formatting and terminology

The students liked how the AP was easy to follow, covering various disabilities and adjustments. The relatively short but concise nature of the AP document was well-received by students who felt that the length of some disability support forms could be intimidating for them to complete. Separating the AP into short sections made it easier for the students to understand and complete, especially for international students for whom English may not be their first language:

At first glance of this, uh feel it is formed, I think the length is good because sometimes I uh in the previous experience I have long form I need to fill in and that I feel very stressed. So as an international student I think at a glance of a long form, very I think a similar thing to maybe dyslexia or some problem it's that is too long I would feel very stressed to fill it. So I think the length is good for me. – **MC**.

It looks very comprehensive in the sense that it addresses a bunch of different needs that the student or worker might have, which I think is a good thing, but it's not overwhelming and length-like. – **JM**.

The document had a clear layout using non-technical language that was straight to the point and easy to follow. The function of the AP was straightforward and understood, covering a wide range of disabilities. The different sections worked well; students understood what was expected of them when completing the AP. One student also found the document to be balanced and dyslexia friendly:

It gives you exactly what you need to know, and I think for people that struggle with processing information having the bullet points at the top, I think it should just cut straight to the point. – **MM**.

Yeah. I knew exactly if I had filled it out; I know exactly what I'd have to write if I filled it in now. I know exactly where I've got to put what. It's very laid out, very sort of basic and easy to sort of fill in. Not complicated. – **MM**.

I think having those [titles] at the top tells you what that section or question is about, which I think is easy for people to understand what is expected of them. – **MM**.

It's straightforward. It's simple. I think it covers a wide range of disabilities.
– DR

It didn't have complicated language. Being a severe Dyslexic, I thought it was useful because I could understand what you were saying in the passport. So, I didn't have any complications understanding it, so I thought it was quite well laid out. Hopefully, that makes sense. – **AH**.

Another student mentioned that for some students with dyslexia or visual impairment(s) the AP may benefit from having the option to change the AP's background colour format to aid its visibility and readability:

A glance at it, I mean, I think everybody's different, aren't they with the way that they read, personally bright colours like yellow and red kind of pop out to me more I think for the actual passport to be reader-friendly the main section is like when you have Section 1, Section 2 maybe highlight that in a block colour like yellow, so it draws your attention straight to that. You know what the main points of the actual form are. – **DR**.

There was also a worry that students for whom English was not their first language, or if they were unfamiliar with the UK's employment market, would struggle with some of the technical language and terminology used in the first section of the document:

I wonder if everyone knows the things about the higher education setting. So, for me, because I come from another country, I am familiar with higher education, something in my country, but coming to the UK is another experience. So, I wonder if there is anything that can solve this problem for students to let them know more about the settings. – **MC**.

We have at least four or five sections each; I am sometimes not quite familiar with that section. So, for example, uh, the first section about me, type the employment you are looking for, and I feel some part I'm not familiar with something like. What are associate professional occupations? – **MC**.

14. Customisation

Most felt the sections were tidy and worked very well. Students felt that a further advantage to the AP was that it is customisable, as it could be easily adapted to meet the user's needs and requirements. There is also scope to add further information relevant to the student's adjustment needs if necessary too (i.e., those with multiple disabilities):

There are sections to kind of writing if there is anything specialised you would need and like you say, it's personal to each person. So, it covers everything and then the person filling it out has everything they need right there. – **DR**.

I struggle with answering telephone calls and speaking to people over the phone. I'd have to put that in more detail because that's the main part of what I do for work, so yeah, just being able to provide more specific details. – DR

It's much easier when it's laid out. So, it just means I don't have to struggle with explaining stuff further. – **AH**.

Some students considered that the usability of the AP could be improved by changing the document's response format and to provide the option for multiple choice 'drop-down' menu options offering a list of options (e.g., section 3). Drop boxes could add more detail and depth to the information as a tick in a box would not be enough to describe certain conditions or adjustments:

Maybe the idea of having cascading options open and down and you can click to close back up again Yeah that would be good too. – **MP**.

I also think having multiple choices allows you to select more than one. If more than one of them, then meet your requirements. – **DR**.

In some situations, explaining the support you need is not always as easy as ticking a box. There might be more information required to get the help properly this time. Like we've said before, having collapsible sections and opening them up to provide more detail would address that." – **MP**.

Section 3, and I assume it's your space to write something in, the little box to the right, but I feel there should also be tick boxes for each category displayed. – **MP**.

15. Further help and guidance completing the AP

Some students were unsure about how to complete the AP when describing their adjustment needs. They found it hard to imagine what types of adjustments they would need or would be available to support them given that these may differ in different occupations and workplaces. Further uncertainty around what type of support was available through the Access to Work scheme compounded this uncertainty. There was a hope that some support and further guidance from employers and universities would be available to assist students with completing the AP document:

Sometimes I don't know what things [adjustments] I should or could put because there is no clue. No clue. Yeah. So, if I can get some hints. – **MC**.

It's a bit difficult to answer if you don't know exactly what could be encompassed under adjustments to the workplace or job modifications, but at first glance, it would sort of address my needs. – **JM**.

I may not tick anyone in this part. Maybe the closest one is job modification, but I still don't know what kind of modification it would be. – **MC**.

An accompanying document like these are possible adjustments that students have had good experiences in the past, or something like that could be a good start. Either that or potentially this is going into like university policies but having people who know what they can do sort of help with it, that's not part of the actual adjustment passport. Still, I do think that some students will need guidance on it. – **JM**.

It's hard to strike a balance between giving too much guidance and not having enough of an idea of what could be included, and I know that's kind of like a problem we've circled a few times. I'm not sure if it's possible to do like this is what could be included because that will also differ from workplace to workplace. They, as you sort of noted there, not everything is provided by the Access to Work scheme, so it sort of depends on the individual firm or organisation that you work for as well, so I'm not sure if it's super relevant to the adjustments we could put down here, for example, as much as it is relevant just to have better guidance from organisations and universities as to what is available there specifically. – **JM**.

Chapter 6. Conclusions and recommendations

All stakeholder groups approved of the passport's focus on adjustments rather than on disability. The Adjustments Passport was seen as an efficient time-saving document that would facilitate the recruitment and adjustments process and increase knowledge and access to the Access to Work scheme. However, a number of recommendations are suggested to enhance the inclusivity of the Adjustments Passport as well as its utility. These focus on terminology and language used, aspects of the Adjustments Passport design, guidance and support for stakeholders, clarity of purpose and scope of the Adjustments Passport, and clarity on usage and transferability of the Adjustments Passport.

Terminology and language

- The name 'Adjustments Passport' was positively received by all stakeholder groups and especially students who felt that its name was well-suited for its purpose. Other alternative names were put forward and included: "Employment Adjustments" and "Access to Work Passport" to better capture the purpose and aims of the passport.
- Although the Adjustments Passport was praised for its focus on adjustments as opposed to disability, care should still be taken to avoid overuse of the term "disability", which may discourage use of the passport by those who do not self-identify as disabled.
- The students appreciated the style and simplicity in layout and its structure was seen as self-explanatory. There was a concern that for some disabled students (e.g., deaf students who sign), and for whom English was not their first language or if they were unfamiliar with the UK's employment market, would struggle to understand some of the technical language and terminology used in the first section of the document. Simplifying the language / terminology used may be helpful here.

Design

- Further consideration needs to be given to the design and layout of the Adjustments Passport, its colour scheme, font type, use of links, etc. to better accommodate those with visual impairments or learning difficulties.
- The Adjustments Passport needs to be formatted in an accessible way with inclusive features, such as 'dark mode', text to speech, and adjustable font size etc.
- Students with dyslexia or visual impairment would benefit from having the option to change the Adjustments Passport's background colour format to aid its visibility/readability.
- There were some suggestions for changes to the document response format and to provide the option for a multiple choice 'drop-down' menu offering a list of options, which may be worth considering, (e.g., section 3), and would help conserve space as a tick in a box may not be enough to describe certain conditions or adjustments.
- Consider broadening the list of types of adjustments to better accommodate those with more subtle and/or unseen disabilities like mental health issues (these may include shift patterns etc.).
- Consider moving the signposting for further help and support to the top of the Adjustments Passport.

Guidance and support for students

- Consider the creation of a document alongside the Adjustments Passport offering guidance in relation to what the Adjustments Passport is for and who has access to the information included in it.
- Students would benefit from additional help and guidance when completing the Adjustments Passport as there was some uncertainty in relation to how much or little

detail is required to complete the Adjustments Passport to a satisfactory standard²¹.

- Consider providing an accompanying 'support' or FAQ document to the Adjustments Passport offering further instruction/guidance in relation to how to complete each section of the Adjustments Passport, perhaps offering examples of adjustments that might be available for specific types of disabilities.

Guidance and support for employers

- Further guidance relating to etiquette around disclosure of the Adjustments Passport and disability to potential employers is needed. Provide guidelines for when and how information within the passport is disclosed during recruitment, in conjunction with pre-existing legislation, such as the Equality Act, that limits employer access to adjustment information prior to employment.
- Further clarity is required in relation to the legal implications / liability for employers/colleagues who have entered into a verbal agreement to fulfil reasonable adjustments outlined in the Adjustments Passport.
- Employers would like to see the development of a protocol or procedure/guidelines to follow if the employer does not make the agreed adjustments or provides inadequate support.
- Additional CPD accredited training and guidance for employers should be considered. There is a need to distinguish between larger versus smaller organisations (larger have pre-existing specialist departments for adjustments but smaller business may not). Training could include how and when to initiate the adjustments discussion, appropriate use of language, building confidence for employee disclosure, Access to Work Scheme, and understanding less tangible adjustments such as communication preferences.

²¹ Feedback on preliminary findings from Adjustments Passport Pilot evaluation was gathered at the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE) Conference (13-15th July, 2022). Please see Appendix 6 for a summary.

- The Adjustments Passport structure should differentiate soft and hard adjustments. Workplace preferences on how best to support the individual must be flexible and subject to reasonable changes to ensure organisational compatibility.
- Consider incorporating a self-selection component for the Adjustments Passport that can be assessed collaboratively with employers/experts to ensure requests are reasonable.

Purpose and scope of the Adjustments Passport

- To counteract students' fear that the Adjustments Passport could be used to avoid employing individuals with disabilities, it may be beneficial if students were reassured that there is no obligation to disclose their disability / diagnosis on the Adjustments Passport.
- Students felt that there was sometimes a lack of knowledge of the Access to Work scheme and/or inconsistencies in its interpretation and administration of workplace adjustments by some employers. Some further guidance for employers in relation to the purpose of the Adjustments Passport document and its role in the Access to Work scheme would be beneficial.
- A further effort is required to build awareness and understanding of the Access to Work scheme and how it operates in conjunction with the Adjustments Passport.

Usage and transferability of the Adjustments Passport

- Students believed that the Adjustments Passport would have been useful if they had access to this document as secondary/high school students. If the document was rolled out earlier, students could work with their teachers and/or careers / disability / well-being advisers when completing the Adjustments Passport and may potentially increase understanding and strengthen their career path selection process. The familiarity with the passport by the time they reach HE would enable students to be far more confident and efficient at engaging with their course and student support.

- There is a need to consider diversity and inclusion at all levels of employment by including opportunities for progression/promotion within the Adjustments Passport.
- Consider the design of a specific, nationally recognised platform for the dissemination of the passport. Passport users should have autonomy over what information viewers can access and when, to ensure consent and confidentiality. Sections of the passport can be released or locked in line with GDPR etc.
- Consider the option for employers to assess historically successful adjustments and recommend them to new employees with a similar disability, with respect to individual differences and needs.
- An important feature of the Adjustments Passport is that it should be a recognised multi-use official document that can be submitted as part of Access to Work application and other governmental incentives.
- A future consideration in relation to the use of the Adjustments Passport by older/unemployed generations with different career pathways (e.g., not via an educational institution). Issues that may arise from this would need to be addressed and accounted for. These may include issues such as - Would assistance be offered through Jobcentre Plus prior to job applications? Who facilitates the use of the Adjustments Passport for those who are unemployed and transitioning without support?

Findings represent the perspectives of students, employers, and support staff's perceptions of the usefulness of the passport. It is also important to consider a review of the actual usage of the passport, as part of a longitudinal approach to reviewing and maintaining the process, to ensure its usefulness and applicability.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Adjustments Passport Survey

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The Passport will make it easier for me to receive the reasonable adjustment support I require as I move into employment.					
2. The Passport will act as a transferable record of reasonable adjustments that could be used to support the making of adjustments throughout my career journey.					
3. The Passport will act as a tool to reduce the need for assessments and the number of times I am required to restate my condition.					
4. The passport will work well as a communication tool with employers.					
5. The Passport will increase my confidence to discuss reasonable adjustments with employers.					
6. The Passport gives me confidence that reasonable adjustments can be put in place to support me.					
7. I believe the Passport will act as a support in progressing into employment.					
8. The Passport has raised my awareness of the Access to Work scheme and the support it offers.					
9. It would have been helpful to have a Passport during my school years.					
10. It would have been helpful to have had a Passport to support my transition into higher education.					
11. I found the Adjustments Passport accessible and easy for me to complete					
12. I would feel able to complete/amend the Passport independently in the future.					

Appendix 2. Disabled Students Focus Group: Topic Guide



Adjustments Passport Pilot Study

Student Focus Group: Topic Guide

1) What was it like filling in and completing the Adjustments Passport?

Prompt/follow-up: Did it make sense? Was it straightforward? Was anything unclear or confusing? Were there any difficulties/challenges? How could it be improved?

2) To what extent does the Passport capture the nature of your disability?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

3) To what extent does the Passport capture the adjustment needs and requirements that you have?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

4) What impact does the Passport have on your confidence to raise/discuss the matter of your disability and adjustment requirements with employers?

Prompt/follow up: How? What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

5) What impact will the Passport have on supporting your conversations with others about your concerns in relation to work and employment?

Prompt/follow up: employers, disability support practitioners

6) What impact will the Passport have on your ability to secure work/employment after university?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it more / less likely? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

7) What impact will the Passport have on your ability to maintain work/employment?

Prompt/follow up: Will it help? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

8) What impact will the Passport have on your ability to obtain in-work support?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it more/less likely? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

9) What impact will the Passport have on the speed at which any adjustments will be put into place by employers?

Prompt/follow up: Will it speed up / slow down the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

10) What impact will the Passport have on the Access to Work application process?

Prompt/follow up: Will it assist/facilitate the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved? Will it reduce the need to repeat information already provided? Will it reduce the need for an Access to Work assessment?

11) What impact will the Passport have on your capacity to change jobs/careers in the future?

Prompt/follow up: Will it assist/facilitate the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

That concludes the questions that I have to ask today. Is there anything you wish to add? Are there any issues we have not covered that you want to raise?

Appendix 3. Disability Support Practitioners Focus Group: Topic Guide



Adjustments Passport Pilot Study

Disability Support Practitioners Focus Group:

Topic Guide

1) To what extent do you feel the Passport captures the nature of students' disabilities?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

2) To what extent do you feel the Passport captures the adjustment needs and requirements of students?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

3) What was it like assisting the disabled student to fill in and complete the Adjustments Passport?

Prompt/follow-up: Did it make sense? Was it straightforward? Was anything unclear or confusing? Were there any difficulties/challenges? How could it be improved?

4) What impact does the Passport have on your confidence to raise/discuss the matter of disability and adjustment requirements with students?

Prompt/follow up: How? What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

5) What impact will the Passport have on supporting your conversations with students about their concerns in relation to work and employment?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it easier/more difficult? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

6) What impact do you think the Passport will have on helping you to support disabled students with the job application process?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it easier/more difficult? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

7) What impact do you think the Passport will have on your ability to help disabled students secure work/employment after university?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it more / less likely? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

8) What impact do you think the Passport will have on raising visibility of the in-work support available to disabled students?

Prompt/follow up: How? What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

8) What impact do you think the Passport will have on your ability to help students' obtain appropriate in-work support?

Prompt/follow up: How will it help? What problems to you foresee? How can it be improved?

9) What impact will the Passport have on helping you assist disabled students with the Access to Work application process?

Prompt/follow up: Will it assist/facilitate the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved? Will it reduce the need to repeat information already provided? Will it reduce the need for an Access to Work assessment?

10) What impact do you think the Passport will have on current assessment and information gathering processes conducted by yourselves?

Prompt/follow up: What will change? How? What works/doesn't work so well? How could it be improved?

That concludes the questions that I have to ask today. Is there anything you wish to add? Are there any issues we have not covered that you want to raise?

Appendix 4. Employers Focus Group: Topic Guide



Adjustments Passport Pilot Study

Employers Focus Group: Topic Guide

1) What are your general thoughts and feelings towards the Adjustments Passport?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? How? Is anything missing? How could it be improved? Is it helpful/useful?

2) What impact will the Passport have on your ability to recruit disabled individuals?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it easier/more difficult? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

3) To what extent does the Passport help you to support the transition of disabled individuals into work in your organisation?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

4) What impact does the Passport have on your confidence to raise/discuss the matter of disability and adjustment requirements with the disabled individual?

Prompt/follow up: How? What works/doesn't work so well? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

5) What impact will the Passport have on supporting your conversations with disabled individuals about their concerns in relation to work and employment?

Prompt/follow up: What works/doesn't work so well? How? Is anything missing? How could it be improved?

6) What impact will the Passport have on your ability to help disabled employees maintain work/employment in your organisation?

Prompt/follow up: Will it help? How? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

7) What impact will the Passport have on disabled individuals capacity to change roles in your organisation?

Prompt/follow up: Will it assist/facilitate the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

8) What impact will the Passport have on your ability to provide appropriate in-work adjustments and support?

Prompt/follow up: Will it make it more/less likely? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

9) What impact will the Passport have on the speed at which any adjustments and support could be put into place by yourselves?

Prompt/follow up: Will it speed up / slow down the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved?

10) What impact do you think the Passport will have on current assessment process for in-work adjustments and support?

Prompt/follow up: What will change? How? What works/doesn't work so well? How could it be improved?

11) What impact will the Passport have on raising awareness of the Access to Work scheme in your organisation?

Prompt/follow up: Will it assist/facilitate the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved? Will it reduce the need to repeat information already provided? Will it reduce the need for an Access to Work assessment?

12) What impact will the Passport have on helping you to assist disabled individuals with the Access to Work application process?

Prompt/follow up: Will it assist/facilitate the process? Why/how? What problems do you foresee? How can it be improved? Will it reduce the need to repeat information already provided? Will it reduce the need for an Access to Work assessment?

Appendix 5. Complete participant demographic information (survey)

Participation was incentivised via the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to win one of 100 £20 vouchers. Multiple disabilities most commonly included Specific learning disability and Social/communication impairment or a Mental Health Condition.

Demographic		WLV	KCL	Total
Recruitment	Total number of final year disabled students	924	-	-
	Number of disabled students accessing survey	163	44	207
	Number of disabled students completing survey	121	25	146
Gender	Male	29	5	34
	Female	86	17	103
	Non-binary	4	1	5
	Did not answer	2	2	4
Ethnicity	White	60	15	75
	Black	28	1	29
	Asian	21	7	28
	Mixed ethnicity	6	1	7
	Other ethnic group	1	0	1
	Did not answer	5	1	6
Level of Study	Undergraduate	73	14	87
	Postgraduate	33	11	44
	Did not answer	15	0	15
Disability	Specific learning disability (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D)	32	6	38
	Social/communication impairment (e.g. Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder)	7	1	8
	Long standing illness or health condition (e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy)	8	0	8
	Mental Health Condition (e.g. depression, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder)	23	2	25
	Physical Impairment or mobility issues (e.g. difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair/crutches)	10	2	12
	Deaf/serious hearing impairment	3	0	3
	Blind/having serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses	1	1	2
	Other impairment	14	0	14

Multiple disabilities	18	12	30
Did not answer	5	1	6

Appendix 6. Feedback from the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE) Conference, held 13-15 July 2022

The Adjustments Passport Pilot’s principal investigator, Dr Iliyan Stefanov, was invited to present the interim findings from the Pilot at the annual conference of the Association of Managers Of Student Services in Higher Education. The presentation was included in the Conference’s schedule and it attracted a significant interest among attendees. Out of 205 delegates, 52 chose to attend the Adjustment Passport session.

Below are the key points from that emerged from the session:

- There was a lot of interest in the Adjustments Passport and the feedback was largely positive.
- There was concern about the level of awareness of employers and their understanding of their obligations in relation to the adjustments. Awareness raising needs to be an essential part of the roll out or this could become yet another barrier for students.
- It was felt by many parties that the passport would also be helpful for placements, and should therefore be made available earlier in a student’s studies.
- There was discussion around who is best placed to complete the passport with the student and how this should be facilitated. Should it be Disability Services, who have the knowledge of adjustments or Careers, who have the knowledge of the work-place.
- Should the student complete the passport, will this affect its veracity? If it is not evidence based, has no legal backing and is a self-completed document, will it be respected and adhered to by employers.
- There were comments that the passport currently follows a deficit model and could be adapted to incorporate a more strengths-based approach.

- A question was raised about who would be responsible for updating the passport post-graduation, as the student progresses through their career. Also, would there be anyone who can support the student / disabled employee with this?
- Apprenticeship students would also be an ideal profile to have access to the adjustment passport. There is a continuous interaction with universities and the workplace from the start with this cohort.