

3 January 2024

# Chair's Column

Hannah David reflects on the work of the forum in raising awareness of issues faced by disabled members.

This is the first edition of Disability Matters online newsletter 2024. This newsletter continues to highlight the issues faced by disabled members across the civil service and commercial sector and offers information on how to best support our disabled members in the workplace.

Towards the end of 2023, the forum successfully put together and delivered a range of workshops and activities at the national disabled members' seminar at the Park Regis hotel in Birmingham. Disabled members came together to share ideas, network and even learnt some British Sign Language thanks to the support from Sarah Lawrence and Simon Deacy at Deaf Friendly Limited. This is also reflected in my article on British Sign Language in this newsletter.

The forum acknowledged Disability History Month from 16 November to 16 December and the theme was "Disability, Children and Youth". One of the main areas of work during the month was to highlight the barriers and challenges to getting a disability diagnosis, particularly in childhood. The forum worked with the national young members' committee to produce materials and an event which gave members the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge on this topic.

The other articles in this edition of the Disability Matters newsletter are from David Roan, Department of Transport rep and Ian Lawther, NEC member on the national disabled members' forum. David Roan writes about the DVSA Covid recovery dispute and the results from the consultative ballot. Ian Lawther talks about the Access to Work scheme which ministerial and large civil service departments can no longer access funding from unless it's for support with mental health issues. Employers have always been responsible for providing reasonable adjustments for disabled workers but as of 1 April 2022 civil service departments will need to fund support for BSL interpreters and taxis to and from work, for example.

We hope you find this newsletter helpful and informative. We would appreciate any feedback and comments on these articles by emailing the PCS equality department. Similarly, if you would like to contribute one or more articles in 2024, please contact the PCS equality department – [equality@pcs.org.uk](mailto:equality@pcs.org.uk). We welcome hearing from new voices from our disabled members.