



# Virgin Media and Scope help a million disabled people



by Natalie Clarkson

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**Virgin Media** and the disability equality charity Scope have together supported more than a million disabled people with the skills and confidence to get and stay in work.

Through their Support to Work service, the two organisations have offered resources and programmes to help disabled people into employment. The free service was launched in 2018 to address the UK's disability employment gap – the rate at which disabled people are employed compared to non-disabled people. This statistic has remained static for more than a decade, with disabled people's employment stuck at about 30 percentage points behind non-disabled people.

The Support to Work service offers online resources to help disabled people to prepare themselves for employment. It also offers a tailored 12-week programme, which provides key advice such as how to write a CV and cover letter, interview practice, as well as how to discuss workplace adjustments with an employer.

For disabled people who are in employment, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult. Many disabled people who have not been redeployed or furloughed have faced an impossible choice between going to work and risking their health, or staying at home and being unemployed. The Support to Work service is facing record demand as a result of the pandemic, with a 236% increase in referrals in October 2020, compared to the same period last year.



Virgin Media

Fundraising by Virgin Media employees has helped Scope and Virgin Media to launch the Support to Work jobs board. This is a place where inclusive employers can advertise their roles that are welcoming applications from disabled people. There are jobs from a range of employers, including the Civil Service and Colas Rail, as well as Virgin Media and Scope.

## **#WorkWithMe**

Virgin Media and Scope have also encouraged more than 100 businesses to commit to becoming more inclusive employers of disabled people. Their #WorkWithMe forum is helping businesses to take the necessary steps to transform their policies and practices so they can support as many disabled people as possible.

Virgin Media and Scope are encouraging other businesses to do everything they can to support disabled people and to join the #WorkWithMe community to become a more inclusive employer.

#WorkWithMe is a free platform designed by business for business, helping big and small organisations to take accountability for how they employ disabled people. It offers practical advice on how to improve the workplace and culture to be more inclusive.



Virgin Media

A number of the UK's biggest brands have signed up to the community since its launch in 2019, including American Express, Centrica, Deloitte, Ford, Innocent Drinks, Legal and General, and Unilever.

"It is an uncomfortable truth that huge numbers of disabled people continue to be left out of the workplace, with the COVID-19 crisis

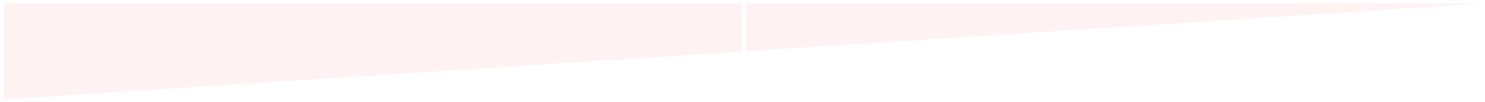
forcing even more disabled people out of work,” Virgin Media’s chief operating officer Jeff Dodds said. “Therefore our #WorkWithMe community has never been more important or timely; helping employers – no matter their size – to become more inclusive and support employers of disabled people.

“As a business leader, I have seen first-hand the benefits of employing disabled people and how they have enriched our company with sought-after skills, from diversity of thought to problem-solving and creativity. I am urging other employers to do what they can to support disabled people during these difficult times and to join #WorkWithMe.”

Visit **Virgin Media** to find out more about how they’re supporting disabled people into employment.

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Richard Branson



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