

1<sup>st</sup> November, 2004

## **DRC USES THE LAW TO CREATE CHANGE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE**

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) intends to put further focus on its legal powers in the coming year following 9 breaking court victories including two landmark cases in the House of Lords during 2003-2004.

Over 50% of all situations of discrimination dealt with by the DRC over the last year were employment-related, highlighting the injustice that disabled people still face at work. Ground-breaking legal victories also covered goods and services (25%) and education (25%). The DRC intends to continue this work in 2004-5 and will focus on strategically important legal cases at the higher, precedent-setting levels.

In addition, the DRC's casework team supported 655 employment cases of discrimination, 386 on goods and services and 317 on education, all of which lead to satisfactory settlement during the year. The helpline responded to 119,633 calls from disabled people and employers, indicating a growing awareness of the need to break down existing barriers.

As the DRC publishes its annual review today (1st November), Bert Massie, Chairman of the Disability Rights Commission said:

"Ground-breaking legal wins have established a precedent where courts are increasingly supportive of equality for disabled people. We aim to maintain this momentum."

"The results of our recent historic legal victories in the Court of Appeal have established a solid basis of rights for disabled people in work and shows that the Disability Discrimination Act has teeth."

The DRC's Annual Review covers work undertaken between April 2003 and March 2004. Highlights of the report include:

- Providing one to one casework support for 1,358 disabled people who faced discrimination;
- Funding 52 new legal cases through the courts or tribunals;
- Publication of the DRC's first Formal Investigation - to identify patterns of discrimination or unequal treatment in the accessibility of websites.

Highlights for the DRC's work in 2004-2005 include:

- Make greater use of powers to carry out formal investigations;
- Promote the new employment rights and duties;
- Improving healthcare services for disabled people;

- Produce statutory codes of practice in the areas of public sector duty and transport provision;
- Continue to support significant legal cases which clarify and establish the meaning of the law;
- To work in partnership with others to encourage the dissemination of advice and information on disability rights.