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QUEEN SIGNS HISTORIC DOWN SYNDROME BILL INTO LAW

The Queen today signed into law an Act of Parliament focussed on improving outcomes for people with Down syndrome and their families. The new 'Down Syndrome Act 2022' is understood to be the first of its kind in the world.

The Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP, a former NHS Doctor and GP, introduced the 'Down Syndrome Bill', as his choice of Private Members' Bill after he successfully secured a Ballot Bill in the House of Commons this session. Dr Fox broke the news today on his social media accounts that the Queen had given her assent to his Bill, making it law.

It is rare for a Private Members' Bill to become law. Dr Fox, an MP for some thirty years, secured both cross-party and Government support. As a result, the Down Syndrome Bill passed through both the House of Commons and the House of Lords without objection. Previous attempts by other members of Parliament to bring forward Bills with a broader remit around learning disability have failed.

An open letter was published last month by the National Down Syndrome Policy Group (NDSPG) who have championed the Bill. The open letter urging members of the House of Lords to ensure that the Bill completed its passage had the support of over a hundred organisations including Mencap.

The Down Syndrome Act will come into immediate force and there will now be a public consultation undertaken by the Government to inform development of the necessary guidance for public bodies.

Dr Liam Fox MP, the Down Syndrome Bill Sponsor said:

"I am thrilled to say that my Private Members' Bill – the Down Syndrome Bill – has been granted the Queen's Assent and will now become the Down Syndrome Act. This means that for the first time there is a law to deal with the issues faced by those with Down syndrome. I hope that three things will flow from this. The first is to help to de-stigmatise Down syndrome. The second is to ensure that current provision of services is improved. The third is to look ahead and deal with future issues, such as long-term care, in an era where, for the first time, many of those with Down syndrome will outlive their parents."

Tommy Jessop, actor from BBC's Line of Duty crime drama and NDSPG Ambassador said:

"Jubilation and celebration! It's time to salute the history makers in the world who have made this new Down syndrome law possible. It is a world first and hopefully it will celebrate and improve the lives of people with Down syndrome and other learning disabilities for the better worldwide. Thank you, Your Majesty, for your Royal Assent."

Peter Brackett, Chair of the NDSPG said:

"The passing of the Down Syndrome Act into UK legislation is a monumental moment in the lives of people with Down syndrome. The Act will bring clarity to services, ensuring that the support that individuals are rightly owed is delivered and applied consistently, irrespective of location."

"The NDSPG is so grateful for the sponsors of the Act, particularly Dr Liam Fox MP and Baroness Hollins for listening to the voice of people with Down syndrome and making them be heard."

"We recognise this is only the start of the journey and we hope to see the entire Down syndrome community to come together through government's consultation process to highlight the deficiencies and showcase the positives."

ENDS

- For more information, see the National Down Syndrome Policy Group website ndspg.org or email contact@ndspg.org
- For media interviews with Dr Fox please contact David Goss david.goss@parliament.uk or call 07972 790445
- For interviews contact:
 - -Ken & Rachael Ross MBE on 07710 612 807 kenross@portsmouthdsa.org or rachaelross@portsmouthdsa.org
 - -Lynn Murray on 07840 966736 or email lynn.murray@dspg.uk

- -Peter Brackett on 07515 121733 peter.brackett@dspg.uk
- Down Syndrome Bill <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0240/210240.pdf>
- Successful Private Members' Bills since 1983 <https://commonsparliament.uk/research-briefings/sn04568/>
- Down's syndrome legislation 'gives people a voice' <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-60955917>
- 'Historic' moment as support for people with Down's Syndrome written into law <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/04/01/downs-syndrome-guidance-given-councils-hospitals-historic-new/>
- People with Down syndrome who are trustees of the Down Syndrome Policy Group welcome the introduction of the Down Syndrome Bill: [Launch of The Down Syndrome Bill - YouTube](#)
- 'It's time for us to live our lives to the full': Line of Duty's Tommy Jessop on changing the world for people with Down's syndrome <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/feb/02/its-time-for-us-to-live-our-lives-to-the-full-line-of-duty-tommy-jessop-on-changing-the-world-for-people-with-downs-syndrome>
- NDSPG Open letter in support for the Down Syndrome Bill <https://ndspg.org/media/>