



**GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATIONS
HEADQUARTERS**

NEWS RELEASE 13.10.03

PM PRAISES GCHQ'S PARTNERSHIP WITH DISABLED STAFF

GCHQ has won lavish praise from the Prime Minister for the work it has done to provide top class amenities for disabled staff at its new headquarters building.

GCHQ's partnership with disabled members of staff has been cited as a model of excellence by Tony Blair. Speaking at a recent IT Universal Enabler Forum for information technologists in London's Guild Hall, the Prime Minister praised the way GCHQ has worked closely with staff to provide the facilities they need in its new building. He also highlighted GCHQ's work with Ability Net - a specialist organisation that advises on accessibility to information communications technology - to bring about positive changes in the working environment: "They have looked at absolutely everything from input and output devices to software solutions and the whole information systems process."

A GCHQ spokesman said: "We are delighted that the PM has recognised this achievement. GCHQ has gained a lot of plaudits for its diversity agenda and the move into our new accommodation has presented us with a great opportunity to strengthen this commitment." He added: "One of our highest priorities over the last three years has been to ensure that staff with special needs can continue to contribute to the business in their new working environment. We are now confident that the facilities available to those with disabilities can be sustained during the transfer to the new building and, where possible, further enhanced once the dust has settled."

In October 1999 GCHQ launched a departmental initiative called "*Breaking Down the Barriers*" which went one step further than traditional equal opportunities policies. It emphasises that every member of staff brings different talents, approaches and styles into the workplace. As part of this initiative, a special needs data collection exercise was carried out and a core "kit" pool was established to improve the speed of response to those with special requirements. A long-term benefit of this will be that new entrants who are disabled will be able to participate in and contribute to the business much sooner.

GCHQ Press Officer: Bob McNally, Tel: 01242 221491 ext 33847