

FEATURE

BARBADOS COUNCIL FOR THE DISABLED

CURRENT MEMBER ORGANISATIONS (JAN 2026)

- **Denisa Belgrave**, President, Barbados Association for the Blind & Deaf
- **Patricia Padmore-Blackman**, Barbados Organisation of Parents of the Disabled (OPOD)
- **Swayne Brown**, President, BARNOD
- **Ralbert Ashton (Ag)**, President, National United Society of the Blind
- **Dr Jennifer Campbell**, President, Barbados Association for Children with Intellectual Challenges
- **Sonia Pile**, Principal, Challenor Creative Arts & Training Centre
- **Reverend Dale Currency**, President, Barbados Association for the Correction of Learning Disabilities
- **Elizabeth Bowen**, Chairman, Special Olympics Barbados
- **Marvin King**, President, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Barbados Inc.
- **Ryan Brathwaite**, President, Paralympics Association of Barbados (Steering Committee)
- **Alyson Forte**, Chairman, Thelma Vaughan Memorial Home Inc
- **Lionel Smith**, President, Barbados Horizon Deaf Charity
- **Rosalind Mascoll**, President, Myasthenia Gravis Association of Barbados
- **Frederick Johnson**, President, The Autism Association of Barbados
- **Nicholas Crichlow**, Chairman, The Barbados Association for Supported Employment (First BASE)
- **Heather Graetzte-Corbin**, Supervisor, The Barbados Association Supported Employment (First BASE)
- **Sylvester "Adelabu" Clarke**, Bajan Stars Dyslexia Support Organisation
- **Patrick Forde**, President, The Rehabilitating and Enabling Society for Amputees
- **Marcia Brathwaite**, President, Barbados Association for Children with Brain Injury (BACBI)
- **Heather Wiggins**, Director, Lifelong Skills Training Inc.
- **Sadie Ann Sissett**, President, The Barbados Kidney Association

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- SUNSHINE EARLY INTERVENTION TRUST**
- **Natasha Lowe**, Principal, The Sunshine Early Stimulation Centre
- **Loretta Lashley**, Director, Christian Learning Clinic
- **Lionel O Weekes**, President, Wheelchair Foundation of Barbados
- **Cheryl Griffith**, President, United Blind Cricket Association
- **Che` Greenidge**, Founder, The Deaf Heart Project
- **Asha Alleyne-Renwick**, President, Barbados Down Syndrome Association
- **President, Allan Haynes**, Kidney Caribbean Charity

CURRENT DIRECTORS

- President** – Patricia Padmore Blackman
- VP** – The Most Hon. Kerryann Ifill FB
- Secretary** – Deborah Gooding
- Treasurer** – Cheryl Ward
- Director** – Frederick Johnson
- Director** – Sean Cook
- Director** – Patrick Forde

FORMER BCD ORGANISATIONS:

- Association for the Advancement of the Deaf
- Association Aid for the Physically Handicapped Children of Barbados
- NCH (National Children Home), Action for Children
- Stroke Support Group



FROM *Progress* to PRACTICE

Barbados has made significant progress, but the next step is turning policy into action to ensure inclusion is experienced in everyday life.

BUILD BETTER DATA

Accurate disability data is essential for informed planning, funding and service delivery. BCD is calling for stronger data collection, analysis and reporting across Government.

ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Improve access to healthcare through accessible facilities, affordable counselling, sign language support and disability awareness training for healthcare workers.

INCLUSION STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Strengthen inclusive education with early intervention, specialist support, updated facilities and teacher training so every child has the opportunity to succeed.

CREATING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

Expand employment opportunities by promoting reasonable accommodations, flexible work options, skills training and incentives for employers to hire persons with disabilities.

MOBILITY MEANS INDEPENDENCE

Ensure reliable, accessible public transport with predictable schedules, trained staff and free government bus travel for registered persons with disabilities.

HOMES WITHOUT BARRIERS

Increase accessible housing through universal design, retrofit grants and mandatory accessible units in new government housing developments.

STRONGER SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Protect and expand disability services while improving access to therapy, rehabilitation and financial assistance for individuals and families.

SUPPORTING LIFE BEYOND SCHOOL

Develop respite and supported living facilities for adults with disabilities while providing much-needed support for ageing parents and caregivers.

MAKING BARBADOS ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE

Strengthen Barbados' position as an inclusive destination by embedding accessibility into tourism planning, standards and marketing.



A Chance To Shine.

How Job Start Plus Is Opening Doors For Young Barbadians With Disabilities



When Human Resources Manager Fera Pascal-Waithe first contacted a Job Start Plus participant about a vacancy at Barbados Beach Club, she did not expect the experience to shift her perspective on hiring.

The candidate, Susanna, did not answer the phone, but responded via WhatsApp. Only later did Pascal-Waithe realise the young woman was hearing-impaired. What followed challenged common assumptions about persons with disabilities.

"Had I known prior to that, I would not have called her," Pascal-Waithe admitted honestly. However, after meeting Susanna and communicating through written notes, she recognised a capable and determined candidate whose disability did not define her ability to perform the job.

Stories like Susanna's reflect what the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and the Third Sector aims to achieve through Job Start Plus.

The National First Job Initiative supports young people not in employment, education or training by helping them gain workplace experience and develop employability skills. It serves individuals aged 16–24, or up to 34 for people with disabilities.

According to Programme Manager Erika Watson, "The promotion of decent work for all" remains a guiding principle of the Ministry's work." The programme has ensured persons with disabilities are included in employment opportunities through partnerships with organizations like the Barbados Council for the Disabled.

Participants complete training in communication, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, stress management, career planning, interview preparation and résumé writing, alongside career counselling and other developmental support.

In August 2025, Susanna joined a cohort for persons with disabilities, supported by sign language interpreters. She particularly valued sessions on communication, stress management and career planning.

After completing the programme, she accessed job opportunities through the network, leading to an interview and position as a kitchen porter at Barbados Beach Club.

"I was excited because it felt like a new life beginning," she said.

The role gave her the chance to apply workplace skills and gain experience, leaving a strong impression on her employer.

"She became one of our premium workers," Pascal-Waithe said. "Everybody embraced her."

Since its launch, Job Start Plus has trained more than 1,000 young people and helped many access work experience and employment. Employers are increasingly recruiting directly from the programme, including the Barbados Workers' Union (BWU).

Executive Assistant and Human Resources Manager Lesley Trotman-Edwards said BWU participated because inclusion aligns with its commitment to workers' rights.

Through the programme, BWU welcomed participants with Down Syndrome and Autism, offering opportunities to build confidence in a professional environment.

She recalled one participant with autism who stood out for his attitude.

"He was one of the most polite people that ever interacted with our organization. He wanted to do the best for the organization," she said.

While some tasks took longer, she noted that dedication, professionalism and a willingness to learn were evident.

"We need to foster an environment where there is more sensitisation," she said. "They can create fantastic creativity and new ways of thinking."

Through Job Start Plus, the Ministry supports employers with technical guidance, sensitisation training, financial assistance and workplace adjustments to encourage inclusive environments.

For Susanna, the programme opened the door to employment. For employers, it revealed talent they might otherwise overlook.

Her advice is simple: stay positive, communicate confidently and believe in your ability to succeed.

It reflects the programme's broader goal—that when barriers are removed, ability can speak for itself.

To learn more about Job Start Plus, the incentive programme for employers willing to give young people with disabilities opportunities or you are a young job seeker, please visit www.labour.gov.bb/jobstartplus or email jobstartplus@labour.gov.bb.

BCD VISION: The realisation of a society that values, respects, accepts, and includes all persons with disabilities.