



## 'Lack of diversity' on LFW catwalks

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**PRESS  
ASSOCIATION**

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A charity has called on London Fashion Week (LFW) to "ramp up on diversity and accessibility", claiming many expected it to follow New York's lead by featuring models with disabilities.

The British Polio Fellowship (BPF) said LFW, which drew to a close yesterday, was "once again hard to relate to" for the 10.8 million people living with disabilities in Britain.

The charity said many people had expected the event to follow the lead of New York Fashion Week, where models in wheelchairs and an amputee took to the catwalk.

Actress Jamie Brewer made fashion history when she became the first model with Down's Syndrome to walk the runway at the New York event.

FTL Moda's show featured models in wheelchairs, while British model and amputee Jack Eyers also took to the catwalk.

BPF chief executive Ted Hill said the move in the US showed that the fashion industry was becoming more accessible, but it was time for British designers to "move with the times".

He said: "Many expected LFW to follow New York Fashion Week's lead, with the American fashion focal point causing a stir when it promoted diversity in using differently able models as part of their exhibitions and created designs that could be transferred to a wheelchair.

"The move in the US clearly shows that the fashion industry is becoming more accessible, but it's now time for British designers to move with the times.

"The British Polio Fellowship has long been one of the frontrunners when it comes to accessibility campaigning. As chief executive of the charity, I was proud last year when we created the first ever dress, to our knowledge, that was made to fully incorporate the wheelchair for our ambassador and Paralympian Anne Wafula Strike, and we continue to campaign for diversity in the fashion industry.

"Many of our members experience challenges with accessibility issues as the result of the late effects of polio and post polio syndrome and we know the importance of a diverse and accessible Britain."

British Fashion Council chief executive Caroline Rush said: "The BFC welcomes healthy and open debate surrounding activity at London Fashion Week, acknowledging its influence and reach.

"We are advocates of campaigns that bring important discussions to the forefront and applaud Ted Hill and Anne Wafula Strike for spearheading diversity issues on behalf of The British Polio Fellowship.

"In 2010 UK retailer Debenhams was the first to launch a high street campaign featuring disabled model Shannon Murphy, two years after Alexander McQueen launched the modelling career of disabled athlete Aimee Mullins on the catwalk at London Fashion Week.

"Aimee Mullins was McQueen's muse, a cover star for Dazed & Confused and featured in UK magazines from Another to Elle, Harper's Bazaar, i-D and Vogue. Designers like McQueen will forever be remembered, not just for his sheer brilliance, creativity and talent, but for his freedom of expression without constraints."