



Disability Confident Employer Guidance

Recruiting and Retaining Disabled People

It is important to ensure that during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, employers are offered appropriate and timely advice and support to help them to recruit and retain employees for their businesses and vital that disabled people are not left behind. This guidance paper aims to offer a refresh on how best to recruit and retain disabled people.

1. What is the legal definition of Disability?

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a long-term, substantial, adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Relevant legislation: Equality Act 2010.

2. What is meant by the term recruitment?

Recruitment (hiring) is the first step of appointment and refers to the overall process of: planning, attracting, selecting, appointing and on-boarding suitable candidates for jobs (either permanent or temporary) within an organisation. Recruitment can also refer to processes involved in choosing individuals for unpaid roles. Managers, human resource generalists and recruitment specialists are often tasked with carrying out recruitment, but in some cases public-sector employment agencies, commercial recruitment agencies, or specialist search consultancies are used to undertake parts of the process. Internet-based technologies to support all aspects of recruitment have become widespread.

3. Why recruit disabled people?

Nearly 8.1 million people of working age in the UK are disabled or have a health condition. Historically there has been a significant gap between the proportion of disabled people employed compared with non-disabled people. Encouraging applications from disabled people is good for business. It can help you to:

- increase the number of high quality applicants available
- create an inclusive workforce that reflects the diverse range of customers it serves and the community in which it is based
- bring additional skills to the business, which could result in large organisational savings

4. What help is available to support the extra costs that disabled people may face in work?

Employers must make reasonable adjustments, also known as workplace adjustments, to support disabled job applicants and employees. This means ensuring disabled people can overcome any substantial disadvantages they may have doing their jobs and progressing in work.

Access to Work may be able to support some workplace adjustment costs as required by an individual with a disability or health condition. Access to Work is a grant to help pay for the additional cost of the support. Access to Work can provide funds towards: special aids and equipment; adaptations to equipment; travel to and from work; communication support at interview and a wide variety of support workers. Access to Work also provides a Mental Health Support Service. This can offer support to individuals with a mental health condition who are absent from work or finding work difficult. For further information, go to: Gov.UK.

5. As a Disability Confident employer I am committed to offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job, what do I need to know?

Disability Confident employers should make it clear in their recruitment material that **if a disabled applicant meets the minimum criteria for the job** (this is the description of the job as set by the employer) they will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talent and abilities at an interview. To make interviews work well for disabled applicants, you will:

- Include clear information in the job advert/ specification that states: *“As a Disability Confident employer, we will ensure that a fair and proportionate number of disabled applicants that meet the minimum criteria for this position will be offered an interview.”*
- Identify the minimum criteria of the job and ensure this information is made available to disabled applicants in the job advert/ specification, making applicants aware of where they can access this information;
- Ensure that you do not include non-essential requirements which could inadvertently exclude a disabled person;
- Apply the commitment to all vacancies, internal and external, without exception.
- Provide an opportunity for disabled people to indicate that they are disabled or have a long-term health condition;
- Ensure that a fair and proportionate number of disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job are invited for an interview;
- Ensure that recruiters (internal or external) know how to support disabled applicants;
- Consider whether the minimum criteria could be met with the facilities available through Access to Work.

6. How do I ensure job-adverts are accessible?

You must not discriminate against disabled people at any stage of the recruitment process. Job adverts must be accessible to all those who can do the job, whether or not they are disabled. When writing job adverts:

- use a font that is easy to read and large enough to read
- make sure that they don't exclude any section of the community
- state clearly that you welcome applications from all sections of the community and that you have an equal opportunities policy
- include in your person specification only the skills and experience which are vital to the job (clearly set out your minimum criteria)
- do not set criteria which automatically exclude certain groups, for example stating that applicants must have a driving licence when there is no requirement for travel within the role
- provide the contact details of someone in your organisation who can provide further information and discuss any reasonable adjustments that the applicant may need
- offer alternative formats for applications, for example if the application is to be made online, provide a paper based form as an alternative.

7. How do I conduct an interview?

Under the Equality Act 2010 you must not ask about a job applicant's health until you have offered them a job, except to:

- find out whether they need any reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process
- find out if they can carry out an essential function of the job
- monitor whether applicants are disabled (this must be anonymous)

Ask applicants if they need an adjustment to the interview process to allow them to be considered for the job. Make any adjustments if they are reasonable, for example:

- use premises that are fully accessible
- change lighting or room layout
- show a visually impaired applicant to their seat
- offer an alternative to a standard interview, for example a working interview or allow extra time
- allow applicants to complete a written test using a computer

When interviewing a disabled applicant, help them to perform to the best of their ability by:

- speaking directly to them rather than any support worker
- telling them about any flexible working patterns that you may be able to offer them
- making sure that you ask each applicant the same questions, whether or not they are disabled

8. What are the key steps in the recruitment process?

Each employer will approach the recruitment process individually, examining what works well for them, whilst focusing on the following key steps:

Step 1 – Preparing to Recruit

Before employers start to look for candidates they will need to put together information about the nature of the job, especially if it is a position that is being created for the first time. They may wish to think about:

- The content (such as the tasks) making up the job
- The output required by the job holder (work hours, number of clients etc.)
- How it fits into the structure of the practice/organisation
- The skills and personal attributes needed to perform the role effectively
- This analysis forms the basis of a job description and person specification.

Step 2 – Preparing a job description and person profile

A job description states the necessary and desirable criteria for selection. Increasingly such specifications are based on a set of competencies identified as necessary for the performance of the job. This often includes:

- Skills, aptitude, knowledge and experience
- Qualifications (which should be only those necessary to do the job – unless candidates are recruited on the basis of future potential, for example graduates)
- Personal qualities relevant to the job, such as ability to work as part of a team
- Identification of the minimum criteria for the individual job-role (ensuring this is made available to disabled applicants).

Step 3 – Finding candidates

It is important not to forget the internal talent pool, especially within larger organisations. Providing opportunities for development and career progression is an important factor for employee retention and motivation. There are also many other options available for generating interest from individuals outside the organisation, options may include:

- **Internal Recruitment Methods may include:** Staff Referrals, Succession Planning, Secondments
- **External Recruitment Methods may include:** online recruitment, press advertising, networking, open days (usually for larger organisations)
- **Advertising:** remains the most common means of attracting and recruiting. Adverts should be clear and indicate the following: requirements of the job; necessary and desirable criteria for the job; job location; reward package; job tenure (e.g. length of contract); details of how to apply.
- **Offer of an interview** to disabled candidates that meet the Minimum Criteria for the job.

Step 4 – Managing the application process

There are two main formats in which applications are likely to be received: the curriculum vitae (CV) or application. These can be submitted either on paper or electronically.

- **Application form:** allow information to be presented in a consistent format, and therefore make it easier to collect information from job applicants in a systematic way and assess objectively the candidate's suitability for the job.
- **Curriculum Vitae:** give candidates the opportunity to sell themselves in their own way and don't have the restrictions of fitting information into a form. However, some candidates include irrelevant material that makes them harder to assess consistently.

Step 5 – Selecting candidates

Selecting candidates involves two main processes: short listing and assessing applicants to decide who should be made a job offer.

- **Shortlisting:** when deciding who to shortlist, it is helpful to draw up a list of criteria using the job specification and person profile. Each application can then be rated according to these standards, or a simple scoring system can be used.
- **Assessment:** A range of different methods can be used to assess candidates. These vary in their reliability as a predictor of performance in the job and in their ease and expense to administer. Typical methods include: General interview; Competency based interview; Role play/demonstration; Sample presentation (for jobs needing presenting skills)

Step 6 – Making the appointment

Offers of employment should always be made in writing. But it is important to be aware that an oral offer of employment made in an interview is as legally binding as a letter to the candidate. A recruitment policy should state clearly how references will be used, when in the recruitment process they will be taken up and what kind of references will be necessary (for example, from former employers). These rules should be applied consistently.

Step 7 – On-boarding and Induction

On-boarding is also known as organisational socialisation and refers to the mechanism through which new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours in order to become effective organisational members of staff. It is simply the process of integrating a new employee into the organisation and its culture.

Induction is a critical part of the recruitment process, for both employer and new employee. An induction plan should include: A clear outline of the job/role requirements; Orientation (physical) – describing where the facilities are;

Orientation (organisational) – showing how the employee fits into the team, along with details of the organisation’s history, culture and values.

Step 8 – Retention

An organisation could consider introducing:

1. Disability Advocates (could include: senior managers that openly discuss their disabilities, whilst encouraging others to disclose their conditions).
2. A mentoring or buddying support programme;
3. A streamlined Workplace Adjustment process;
4. Regular meetings (as appropriate) to ensure disabled people are thriving at work
5. A Disability Network (face to face or virtual) that enables disabled people to connect with each other and offers a voice within the organisation.

For further information:

Amanda Wadsworth MBE DL
Disability Confident
07971 994019