



Creating a disability-smart
world together

Becoming Disability Smart

Diane Lightfoot, CEO, Business Disability Forum
Anchor Institutions, 6 March 2023

About Business Disability Forum

- We are the leading business membership organisation specialising in disability inclusion, based in the UK, and with global reach.
- Our members represent a huge cross sector of UK and global business, employing nearly 20% of the UK workforce and an estimated 8 million people worldwide.
- We work with our members as trusted partners. We meet you where you are on your disability-smart journey and provide expert, tailored, trusted, advice and support.
- We provide opportunities for our members to share, learn from each other and collaborate.

Disability Smart Framework

1. Leadership



2. Learning and development



3. Workplace adjustments



4. Recruitment



5. Retention



6. Customers and service users



7. Procurement



8. Communication



9. Built environment



10. Technology



Why this matters – a few facts and figures...



There are at least 14.6 million disabled people in the UK.

That's 22% of the UK population or more than 1 in 5 people.



19% of working age adults are disabled.

This rises to 44% in over 65s.



83% of disabilities are acquired.

The average age of acquiring a disability is 53.



It's about talent!

Diverse teams perform better = positive impact on your bottom line

And yet...

52.7% of disabled people of working age are in employment...

...compared to 81.1% of their non-disabled peers – that's a huge untapped talent pool!



**Do you know how
many disabled
people are in your
workforce?**



Over 90% of disabilities are not immediately visible.

So you almost certainly already employ more disabled people than you think you do!

Why does it matter anyway?

- Where is people's energy going? On the job – or hiding a condition? Covering is exhausting.
- Identity around disability is very personal and complex
 - Lots of factors including time since diagnosis, visible vs non-visible
- People may not identify as “disabled” but still need adjustments or accommodations
- When are you asking? How are you asking?
- **How does it feel to share a difference? Are you sure?**

Employees are more afraid to raise sensitive issues than executives believe

Leader perception of how safe employees with disabilities feel raising sensitive issues is ~20% higher than employees themselves feel. (source: Accenture)

Executive: To what extent do you believe employees in your organization feel safe to..

Employee: To what extent do you feel safe to...

% Quite / Completely safe

Be open about a physical disability



Tell their manager/supervisor that they are not coping with the...

Raise a concern about the behaviour of a senior colleague

Be open about a neurological condition

Raise a concern about their mental health

■ EXECUTIVES

**Are your
employees
thriving?**

Or just surviving?

Workplace adjustments

- “Reasonable adjustments” under Equality At
- Focus on **barrier and what you need to do to remove it**
- Most adjustments are not costly – and lots are free.
 - Average cost of adjustment is only 7% of cost of rehiring
 - Central pot for funding – and Access to Work can help
- Some examples of adjustments:
 - **Kit** adjustments like assistive tech or ergonomic equipment
 - **Human** adjustments like BSL or a job coach
 - **Soft** adjustments like an accessible parking space

Do the benefits outweigh the risks?

- In our Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey 2019:
 - 34 per cent of those without adjustments said they **did not make requests because they were worried** their employer might treat them differently
 - 31 per cent of those without adjustments said they did not make requests because they were **worried other colleagues would treat them differently**
- **That's over a third of people who are not as productive or happy at work as they could be!**

Creating an inclusive culture

The role of senior leaders

- Creating “psychological safety”
- Senior leaders set the tone: what matters round here?
- “Usualise” the conversation
- Personal stories - share conditions or working differently
- Practice what you preach – e.g. hybrid working, work/life balance. Actions speak louder than words!
- Remember privilege and give permission. More than once!
- Getting the language right

- Tell or share, not disclose or declare
- Person first or identity first language
- Language around adjustments vs
“What do you need to do the best possible job for us?”
- Wider organisational messaging – support or undermine?



The role of line managers

- Not about being an expert in conditions
- Confidence to have the conversation
- Trust and empowerment:
 - “What do you need to do your job well?”
 - “If I do this for you, everyone will want one / it’s not fair on everyone else” – really?
 - From “why” to “why not?”
- Spotting the signs
- Don’t make assumptions – is something else going on?

What does disability smart recruitment look like?

Attraction and application

- Take a step back: What do you really need?
 - Qualifications, experience?
 - Outcomes focus - **what**, not **how**
 - Could the job be done differently, flexibly, part-time, from home?
- Do I see “someone like me”? Will I belong?
 - Story telling and imagery
 - Do people already work with adjustments? Then say so!
- Are your portals accessible? Offer alternatives
- Don't build in bias e.g. algorithms and beware pitfalls of AI

Application and assessment

- Are you testing the right skills for the job?
 - Work trials and opportunity to demonstrate skills
 - Do you need a timed test?
 - Unambiguous questions
 - Questions in the advance may be appropriate (not always)
 - Meet the panel/visit
- Recruiting remotely: Speak to candidates about the platform
- **Ask about adjustments at every stage of the process**
- **Don't forget onboarding!**

And

- Don't let fear of getting it wrong mean you do or say nothing
- Right intent and listening with a desire to learn can go a long way



Join us!

- Dedicated Business Partner
- Advice service – unlimited access to any manager
- Knowledge Hub – unlimited logins and access to all content
- Toolkits include:
 - Getting Started, Recruitment, People management
 - Mental health, Neurodiversity, Occupational Health, Customers
 - Inclusive communication plus new global language guide
- Networks and roundtables: Technology and Global taskforces, Inclusive Comms network, Neurodiversity network

Contact us

Business Disability Forum

businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

E: dianel@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

T: +44 7971 671482



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