



Creating a disability-smart  
world together

# Becoming Disability Smart

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# Where we are now

Slide here to recap from previous session

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



**Over 90% of disabilities are not immediately visible.**

**So you probably many more disabled people than you realise!**

# Does it matter if you know?

- Aside from workforce reporting (which I'll come back to)...
- 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

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Source: GTE 2020; Executive survey N=1748, Employee survey, Employees with disabilities N=5870

# 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!**

# So, should I measure?

- Why do you want to measure?
- If you do - not just “prevalence” but quality of experience e.g. engagement, satisfaction with adjustments
- Pay gap? Need 75% response to make numbers credible
- An art not a science – the value is in the narrative
- Voluntary reporting – showing you mean it
- BDF paper on workforce reporting coming soon
- Culture comes first – create an environment of trust



# 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?



# Getting it wrong...



# Getting it right



# Support your senior leaders

- 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



**I AM SPARTACUS**

# Workplace design: practical action to close the say: do gap



# Workplace adjustments

- “Reasonable adjustments” under Equality Act 2010
- 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
- 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, flexible working patterns or home working.

# Why offer adjustments to all?

- Increased performance, engagement and contentment
- People feel able to ask for support, not hide a condition
- Enables people to perform at their best with barriers removed
- NB duty for employer to provide an adjustment if they know one is needed or **“could reasonably be expected to know”**
- Offer proactively – at every stage of recruitment process, at onboarding, during one to ones
- Always be prepared to make them, concentrate on the barrier not the disability – and know where to go for support
- **Inclusive design reduces (but doesn't remove) the need for individual adjustments**

# The role of line managers

- Key in providing adjustments – confidence to have the conversation, not about being an expert in conditions
- 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 – and don’t make assumptions – is something else going on?

# Where do we want to be? Setting priorities

# 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



# For discussion

- Where do we want to be?
- Where do we need to focus?
- What could we do together?
- What's next? Two next steps...

# Contact us

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