

Hiring and Skills Working Group Update: Action on disability in the workplace 26 June 2023

The Hiring and Skills Working Group's recent focus has been on disability in the workforce as part of collective efforts to create more inclusive workplaces. The overarching goal has been to put in place interventions that support disabled colleagues at work and remove barriers to recruitment for disabled candidates.

On 6 March 2023, the CEO of Business Disability Forum, Diane Lightfoot, presented to the group on the barriers to inclusion disabled Londoners face in the workforce. At that meeting, members of the group also shared best practice they have adopted in their own organisations).

Top tips

Top tips from the meeting included:

- Ensure that disabled people recognise themselves in your literature and imagery so they feel they belong in the organisation
- Encourage members of staff – particularly those in senior leadership positions – to share their own stories of disability and how they work differently
- If you have achieved Disability Confident, then make sure your accreditation is visible, not just on your main website, but also on your careers pages / recruitment portal, so more people recognise you as a Disability Confident employer and have the confidence to put themselves forwards for roles
- If you are not yet a [Disability Confident](#) employer, consider signing up to achieve this status and push towards Level 3
- Think about the language you use in all of your comms channels. Check BDF's [inclusive language toolkit](#) for tips.
- Review how you ask colleagues to 'share' (rather than 'declare' or 'disclose') information about their disabilities / long term conditions, including potentially spelling out the range of long-term conditions that this can include so they recognise themselves in the question e.g. Do you consider yourself to be disabled, or have a long-term condition? This could include a mobility impairment, sensory impairment, mental health condition such as depression, anxiety, neurodivergent conditions such as dyslexia, autism and ADHD, or long-term condition such as cancer, HIV, chronic back pain, asthma and arthritis.
- Consider running an internal comms campaign to explain why you want this information, why it's important and what you will do with it. (e.g. TfL's Count Me In campaign)
- Work with your staff networks to get this right.
- In developing a JD and job advert, take a step back and think about *what* needs to be done in the role, not *how* or *where*. What are really the key requirements? Is a particular qualification really needed? Are there different ways of testing for the requirements of the role? Does it need to be a telephone or panel interview? Does the test need to be timed? Could questions be provided in advance? Etc.
- Look at how and where you advertise job opportunities and the outreach channels you use (e.g. [Even Break](#), [Project Search](#) etc.)
- Proactively *offer* adjustments - both during the recruitment process and within the workplace - rather than making people ask for them.

- When you recruit and onboard people, make it clear that people already work with adjustments in your organisation, so that people feel more confident about expressing their needs.
- Keep having the conversation about adjustments at regular intervals when people are in the workforce, given disabilities can be acquired at any time.
- Think about how you ask the question about what adjustments people need e.g. What do you need to do the best possible job for us?
- Support managers to feel confident to have these conversations with guidance and training
- Ensure that all managers in your organisation know about what is available via Access to Work, and – if you are a member of the Business Disability Forum – about their advice line
- Consider publishing your disability pay gap. This demonstrates your commitment to creating a more inclusive workplace, and encourages staff to share their disability information as individuals can see how the data is being used.

One to one meetings with members of the Hiring and Skills Working Group have since been held to find out what actions members have put in place or started as a result of the meeting, or additional support that members might need to better support disabled Londoners and create more inclusive workplaces.

Anchor institutions' actions

Actions taken since the last meeting include:

- Linking up with the Business Disability Forum for specialist advice on supporting disabled colleagues
- Sharing tips from the meeting with apprenticeships leads working on disability
- Redeveloping disability policies to make them more inclusive
- Tasking HR to speak to all existing staff members 1:1 to see if they have any support needs that have developed since they started with the organisation (noting that the majority of disabilities and long-term health conditions are acquired later in life)
- Changing the wording used in data collection exercises from 'declare' to 'share' in order to take a more sensitive approach and help build a more accurate picture of the number of disabled colleagues in their organisation.
- Committing to progress Disability Confident accreditations. Note that the discussions emphasised the value of achieving Level 3 of the scheme (Disability Confident Leader), which involves external validation rather than just self-assessment and is the level that all members should be aiming to achieve.

Other existing practice that members have highlighted in this area includes:

- Putting in place disability action plans
- Appointing additional staff members who are on the autistic spectrum
- Offering guaranteed interviews for disabled candidates Holding disability awareness days
- Running staff-led events and publishing staff blogs to raise awareness on issues such as neurodiversity in the workplace
- Introducing compulsory training for all staff about disability and inclusion, as well as more advanced modules for all line managers.
- Introducing compulsory inclusive recruitment training for all hiring managers.

- Introducing a requirement for all staff to set EDI objectives as part of their performance review process, with peer challenge sessions for Heads of Units to review these objectives.
- Creating a staff handbook which contains a number of policies that deliver on best practice on inclusion and diversity
- Using objective criteria for recruitment, promotion and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection
- Where possible, ensuring shortlisting is completed by more than one person.
- When utilising an agency to recruit, adopting a Blind CV approach so that the candidate's personal details, name and gender remain undisclosed until they are selected for interview.

Resources

In response to the additional support needs members articulated, we have compiled the following resources:

- ✓ Business Disability Forum's [Inclusive Language toolkit](#) – This provides general tips about out how to talk about disability as well as language to use and to avoid and is designed for people in a variety of roles.
- ✓ [Secrets and Big News](#) – This report by Kate Nash Associates provides lots of useful advice on how best to enable disabled people to be themselves at work.
- ✓ [The Business Disability Forum Toolkit](#) - This toolkit includes sections on attraction and job design; interviews, assessment and selection; onboarding and induction; recruitment and the law; outsourcing recruitment services.
- ✓ [Are You IN?](#) - This toolkit helps employers to better support people living with invisible disabilities and long-term conditions. The toolkit includes a range of free resources including talking guides, posters, HR support and more.
- ✓ [Autism and Neurodiversity Toolkit](#) - This provides practical guidance for supporting people who have neurodiverse conditions, including examples of reasonable adjustments.