



Inclusive Futures

Promoting disability inclusion

A recruiters' introduction to workplace adjustments



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The **disability-confident employers' toolkit** is a portfolio of practical guides, checklists, case studies and resources designed and produced by the Inclusive Futures consortium.

We've developed this guide for leaders, HR executives and property managers to become confident to take the next step towards fostering inclusive workspaces and practices.

As an open source toolkit, you can tailor it to fit your industry, workplace and country. Please follow guidance below.

If you have any feedback, please get in touch. To share your thoughts on using or adapting the toolkit, or to explore collaboration opportunities, please contact Simon Brown (sbrown@sightsavers.org). Together we can build more inclusive societies for all.

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Disclaimer

Nothing contained in this pack shall be considered as rendering of legal advice. It is recommended that the user of this pack ensures that they have informed themselves with any and all updates of standards, law or regulation as may be applicable in their country.

Introduction

This guidance is part of the **disability-confident employers' toolkit**: a unique portfolio of practical guides, checklists, case studies and resources that make it easier for any business to be disability confident.

These resources are grounded in the reality of business and best corporate practice, and in the principles that underpin the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - a UN convention which promotes the full inclusion and fundamental human rights of persons with disabilities through legislative reform and societal and attitudinal change, in 181 countries.

With this portfolio of business-relevant resources, we aim:

- To make it easier to employ people with disabilities fairly, on the basis of individual capability, talent and potential.
- To help engineer more effective, efficient and equitable labour markets, which – because employers are positioned as valued service users and potential allies – enable significantly more people with disabilities to gain meaningful employment at all levels.
- To enable business improvement which benefits both the business and people with disabilities.
- To create opportunities for businesses to become leaders in the transition to accessible and inclusive workplaces.
- To facilitate innovative solutions and focused collaboration between business leaders and leaders with disabilities.

The **disability confident employers' toolkit** is produced by Inclusion Works, a consortium of leading international organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), led by Sightsavers who are working in partnership with business leaders in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. Inclusion Works forms part of the **Inclusive Futures** initiative.

We are grateful to our funder UK aid for supporting this pioneering work. We would also like to thank the International Labour Organisation's Global Business Disability Network and the national business disability networks in Bangladesh and Kenya for their invaluable contribution. In addition, we extend our thanks to Jose Viera, Ruth Warick, and Kimber Bialik, members of the International Disability Alliance Inclusive Livelihoods Task Team, for their overview of the documents with a disability lens, and to staff members of Sightsavers for their very practical assistance.

For further information about this open-source employers' toolkit, contact your national business disability networks or email Sightsavers at inclusionworks@sightsavers.org

Enabling candidates with disabilities to compete fairly on the basis of individual capability and potential

The building blocks of best practice include ensuring that the company:

- Creates a barrier-free recruitment process which adapts for individuals, so that everyone can compete fairly on the basis of equal opportunities.
- Encourages recruiters and managers to keep an open mind and not assume that only specific jobs can be done by, or should be reserved for, people with disabilities.
- Understands that we treat people differently in order to treat them fairly – this is called making the reasonable adjustments (sometimes called accommodations) that create a level playing field for every candidate – particularly candidates with disabilities.
- Does not use pre-employment medical or psychometric tests to screen out candidates on grounds of medical history or disability (unless so required by law).
- Does not operate blanket exclusions for groups of people with disabilities. It is not acceptable to say: “we do not consider applicants from that school, or who have a history of mental ill health, or who are blind”. These types of blanket exclusions are inherently discriminatory and will be unlawful in many jurisdictions.
- Expects the hiring managers to focus on the candidate’s ability, not disability. The question should be: “how could this person contribute to our business if we were flexible and clever in how we adapt the way we do things?” And to ask the individual at every stage of the process: “how could we make it easier for you to succeed?”
- Efficiently delivers those adjustments post-job offer which enable the successful candidate to begin to do the job as quickly and with as little fuss as anyone else; and has built-in review points afterwards to ensure these adjustments remain fit for purpose.
- Understands that HR alone cannot be held responsible for providing all employees with the tools, the accessible and usable built environment, and the flexibility that they require. Workplace adjustment-related performance standards are also needed for IT, Property and Facilities Management, Procurement, Health and Safety and Occupational Health, with learning and development to enable co-worker buy-in and support.
- Aims for the best practice which transforms its legal obligations to the mutual benefit of both business and people with disabilities.
- Recognises that people with disabilities will aspire to develop their careers and should be considered for all levels of position.

Awareness that everyone is different is key to disability-confident recruitment. Knowing when and how to change the way work can be done is called ‘making reasonable adjustments’.

The term ‘reasonable adjustments’ – widely used by global business – was introduced in this context by the UK Disability Discrimination Act (1995). Other legal frameworks, notably the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), use the phrase ‘reasonable accommodations’. Failure to make reasonable adjustments or accommodations is unlawful in a growing number of jurisdictions.

Both terms are equivalent in meaning and expect managers to routinely provide all employees with the tools, flexibility and adjustments they need if they are to do their best, and to deploy the disability and accessibility expertise required to ensure that every candidate and every employee with a disability can also realise their potential on an equal basis.

It is also recognised that organisations often make adjustments that go beyond legal obligations for a wide range of employees, for example childcare, flexitime, gym memberships, remote working and noise-cancelling headsets. This is in keeping with the goal of full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

Susan Scott-Parker, Business Disability International

Who are reasonable adjustments for?

Shell International's policy states:

"All employees and candidates for employment who encounter circumstances which mean that they need, for a short or a long term period, a workplace adjustment – this may be as a result of injury, illness, health condition, disability or pregnancy. Adjustments may also be granted on a temporary basis to support employees with exceptional caring responsibilities."

The term 'people with disabilities' covers a very wide range of people. A total of 181 countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which uses the following definition:

"People with disabilities include those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Skilled recruiters

- Remove obstacles in advance for people who have the most frequently encountered access needs.
- Strive to create a universal design approach. Ramps, for example, benefit many employees others than those using a wheelchair, and policies written in accessible language instead of legalese are easier for all employees to understand.
- Understand that most disabilities are not visible.
- Focus on talent and potential and ask all candidates: "how can we make it easier for you to succeed?"

The aim is to create a fair, barrier-free and flexible recruitment and employment experience that empowers a much wider pool of candidates and colleagues to contribute to business success.

There are more than **1.3 billion** people with disabilities worldwide and the number is growing as we age and with medical advances.

What kind of ‘adjustments’ or ‘accommodations’ are we talking about?

There are eight kinds of workplace/recruitment adjustments

Most adjustments or accommodations simply ensure everyone is treated fairly and given the same opportunities as all other candidates.

1. Think differently and challenge assumptions about groups. Move from “deaf people can’t work in teams” to “what can this deaf person do?”
2. Create an accessible built environment: access to premises, signage, lighting, good acoustics.
3. Tolerate a process which might take a bit longer to attract, to assess individual capability, to adapt and to induct.
4. Change procedures and policies, bypass standard interviews, allow flexitime in induction and revise job descriptions.
5. Train managers, colleagues, recruiters, IT etc.
6. Welcome human aides: job coaches, interpreters, personal assistants, captioners etc.
7. Remove barriers created by online recruitment and related policies. Enable access to assisted devices and specialist software.
8. Invest in targeted recruitment projects to tap into a new talent pool.

Business Disability International

A few examples to illustrate how the focus for adjustments is on practical solutions

- Enable a candidate who cannot access an online recruitment process to apply via a different channel. Better still, first ensure that the end-to-end online process – including the website – is already accessible.
- Provide the application forms in an accessible format.
- Provide alternative routes through the recruitment process. For example, enable a candidate who cannot hear or who stammers to bypass the telephone interview.
- Bypass psychometric tests and AI-powered assessments unless there is evidence that they have been validated for job seekers with the individual’s disability, and it is certain the tests are in themselves accessible and usable.
- Be open to considering alternative educational backgrounds or alternative experience of a candidate rather than relying on traditional work experience. Consider that the person may well have been denied those opportunities for reasons that have nothing to do with their career potential.
- Move the interview of a candidate who has a mobility impairment from up a flight of stairs

to an accessible ground-floor room.

- Invite candidates to describe the mitigating circumstances if their academic scores are below what would normally be required, while challenging the assumption that certain academic qualifications are in fact essential for the job.
- Allow candidates to use human aides and/or technology communication aids as 'adjustments' throughout the process, so that they can demonstrate their true capability and potential, and then to continue with those aids in the workplace if needed.
- Provide candidates via multi-channels (not just phone or email) with detailed information regarding the recruitment process, so that they can help you to anticipate any adjustments that might be needed at any stage.
- For candidates with disabilities for whom the online and/or assessment process presents an access obstacle, allow them extra time, support to complete application forms, tests, assessments and so on.
- Enable candidates who are disadvantaged by traditional interviews to bypass the standard process and demonstrate their potential via extended interviews, job try-outs or other creative assessment alternatives.

Defining the best practice called 'Disability Confidence'

Disability-confident recruiters...

- Understand how disability, and the company's disability-related performance, affects their ability to recruit from the widest talent pool. They communicate the need to recruit everyone, including people with disabilities, on the basis of capabilities and potential, and consistently reinforce the need for a best practice culture, going beyond basic legal compliance.
- Learn directly from people with disabilities as colleagues, potential colleagues and community stakeholders, and act on what is learned. They build productive personal relationships with people with disabilities and their organisations, which make collaboration and mutual support achievable.
- Communicate their interest in recruiting people with disabilities widely, through multiple channels, and in partnership with organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) and individuals with disabilities.
- Remove obstacles in the recruitment process which unfairly prevent or hinder groups of



people with similar disabilities from competing fairly (i.e. providing ramps for people with mobility impairments, providing accessible application forms for job seekers using voice activated software etc).

- Make adjustments which enable individual candidates to navigate the recruitment process and demonstrate their potential, given individuals with the same disability will often do the same task differently.
- Understand that the provision of adjustments, for example providing employees with the tools and flexibility that they require, is a managerial rather than a medical responsibility.
- Understand that most job seekers with disabilities do not require expensive and/or complex workplace adjustments. Disability-confident recruiters also know that enabling colleagues to have the tools and flexibility they need in order to contribute enhances productivity and employee engagement. This also reduces employee turnover, and reputational and legal risks.
- Respect confidentiality regarding an individual's disability and/or health condition.
- Do not make assumptions about human potential on the basis of any 'label'.
- Communicate widely across the business that:
 - We treat employees differently in order to treat them fairly.
 - 'Equal opportunities' does NOT mean we treat everyone exactly the same.
 - We cannot have meaningful diversity until we are confident that we do not inadvertently exclude or unfairly discriminate against people with disabilities.
 - We will make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities, even when not required to do so by local legislation.
- Ensure that their IT and facilities departments work to the disability and accessibility-related performance standards which help deliver adjustments quickly.
- Do not require managers to pay for adjustments needed at any stage of the recruitment and onboarding process, as this all too often delays implementation.
- Routinely invite feedback from candidates, both successful and unsuccessful, to ensure continuous improvement of the recruitment process.
- Routinely review their recruitment process, end to end. For this purpose, use such tools such as the more detailed **Inclusive Futures recruiters' checklist for disability-confident employers**.

Fundamentals of Disability Confidence

Leadership

Communicating the rationale for Becoming Disability Confident

Liberating the potential of technology

Enabling citizenship, respect, and economic inclusion

Becoming an exemplary employer

Creating a truly accessible built environment worldwide

Encouraging key suppliers to become Disability Confident

Building universal design and accessibility into new product development

Moving beyond the expectations of customers with disabilities

Learning directly from people with disabilities



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