

Becoming a Disability Confident Employer



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1. Why recruit disabled people?

1.1 Definition of disability

[A disabled person is defined](#) as someone with a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' effect on their ability to do normal daily activities ([Equality Act 2010](#)).

1.2 The benefits of employing disabled people

Nearly 7 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 a workforce that reflects the diverse range of customers it serves and the community in which it is based
- bring additional skills to the business, such as the ability to use British Sign Language (BSL), which could result in large savings

The costs of making reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled employees are often low.

The benefits of retaining an experienced, skilled employee who has acquired an impairment are usually greater than recruiting and training new staff. It is also good for the individual.

Disability Confident

We are working with employers to:

- engage and encourage them to become more confident so they employ and retain disabled people and those with long term health conditions
- increase understanding of disability and the benefits of employing or retaining disabled people
- ensure disabled people have opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations
- make a substantial contribution to halving the disability employment gap

Find out more about the [Disability Confident campaign](#).



2. Help employing disabled people

2.1 Reasonable adjustments

You must make reasonable 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 ([Equality Act 2010](#)).

An individual can take you to an employment tribunal if they think you have not made reasonable adjustments.

Many reasonable adjustments involve little or no cost and could include:

- making changes to a disabled person's working pattern
- providing training or mentoring
- making alterations to premises
- ensuring that information is provided in accessible formats
- modifying or acquiring equipment
- allowing extra time during selection 'tests'

Find out more about what [reasonable adjustments are and what you may need to do](#).

[Access to Work](#) can help towards the costs of making reasonable adjustments.

More information on reasonable adjustments, including examples, is in Chapter 6 of the [Equality Act 2010 Code of Practice](#).

2.2 Help with the extra costs disabled people face in work

You may be able to get help from Access to Work towards some costs where an individual requires support or adaptations. Find out more in the [Employer's guide to Access to Work](#).

Access to Work usually provides a grant to pay for the cost of the support. For example it can provide funds towards:

- special aids and equipment
- adaptations to equipment
- travel to and from work
- communication support at interview
- a wide variety of support workers

Access to Work also has 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.



2.3 Extra support for small employers

If you're a business with 25 or fewer employees, you can get extra support through Jobcentre Plus to help you recruit and retain staff with a disability or health condition.

This support includes:

- matching candidates to jobs
- support through the interview process
- advice on workplace adaptations, induction and mentoring
- help arranging in-work support from local community specialists
- help completing an Access to Work application

[Contact Jobcentre Plus](#) to speak to a Small Employer Adviser.

2.4 Supporting older workers

Older workers often have a vast amount of experience, knowledge and skill. By not retaining older workers you can face a loss of output and extra recruitment costs.

Our [Age Positive](#) page provides information on employing older workers, including case studies about specific business sectors.

2.5 Supporting disabled people to remain in work

You can get help from the Employer Adviser and Work Psychology Services at Jobcentre Plus if an employee:

- becomes disabled
- has a change in their impairment or health condition that could mean they face barriers to remaining in work

For more information [contact Jobcentre Plus](#).

The Workplace Mental Health Support Service, delivered by Remploy and funded by the Department for Work and Pension, provides free and confidential support to help anyone who is employed remain in their job.

Their workplace advisors will help employees with:

- Advice for up to six months
- Coping strategies
- A wellbeing plan
- Workplace adjustments
- Getting support from the employer (if the employee chooses to disclose).

For more information contact [Remploy](#).



3. Disability law

3.1 Discrimination

It is against the law to treat someone less favourably than someone else because of a personal characteristic, such as being disabled. There are different [kinds of discrimination](#).

Discrimination does not have to be direct to be illegal. You can discriminate indirectly with working conditions or rules that disadvantage a group of people more than another.

Discrimination can include, for example:

- not hiring someone because of their disability
- selecting a particular person for redundancy because of their disability
- paying someone less than another worker without good reason

Find out how to [avoid discriminating against disabled people during the recruitment process and while they work for you](#).

3.2 Dealing with performance issues

All employees, whether or not they are disabled, have changes in their performance levels. These could be problems with attendance, behaviour or conduct.

Before starting action to deal with poor performance, you must make [reasonable adjustments](#) to allow a disabled employee to improve their performance. If you don't, they could take you to an employment tribunal.

4. How to recruit disabled people

4.1 Accessible job adverts

You must not discriminate against disabled people at any stage of the recruitment process.

You must make job adverts 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



- 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

4.2 Conducting interviews

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

4.3 Disability Confident symbol

Sign up to the Disability Confident scheme and you can use the Disability Confident symbol on adverts to show that you encourage applications from disabled people.

The Disability Confident symbol replaced the 'Two Ticks' (positive about disabled people) symbol in 2016.

Disability Confident helps businesses:

- Draw from the widest possible pool of talent
- Secure and retain high quality staff who are skilled, loyal and hard working



- Save time and money on the costs of recruitment and training by reducing staff turnover
- Keep valuable skills and experience
- Reduce the levels and costs of sickness absences
- Improve employee morale and commitment by demonstrating that they treat all employees fairly

4.3.1 Level 1: Disability Confident Committed

To be recognised as Disability Confident Committed just agree to the Disability Confident commitments and identify at least one action that you'll carry out to make a difference for disabled people.

The commitments are:

- Inclusive and accessible recruitment
- Communicating vacancies
- Offering an interview to disabled people
- Providing reasonable adjustments (this can be done through Access to work)
- Supporting existing employees

The activities include (you must identify at least one):

- Work experience
- Work trials
- Paid employment
- Apprenticeships
- Job shadowing
- Traineeships
- Internships
- Student placements
- Sector-based work academy placements (SBWA)

Your business may be doing these things already. If so, the scheme is a great way of letting everyone know that you're serious about equal opportunities for disabled people.

Once you've signed up as Disability Confident Committed you'll receive:

- A certificate in recognition of your achievement
- A badge for your website and other materials for 12 months
- A self-assessment to help you continue your journey to becoming a Disability Confident Employer



4.3.2 Level 2: Disability Confident Employer

Once you've signed up for level 1 you can progress to level 2, a Disability Confident Employer, by self-assessing your organisation around 2 themes:

- getting the right people for your business
- keeping and developing your people

Disability Confident Employers are recognised as going the extra mile to make sure disabled people get a fair chance.

Having confirmed you've completed your online self-assessment, you'll be registered as a Disability Confident Employer for 2 years. You'll receive:

- a certificate in recognition of your achievement
- a badge for your website and other materials for 2 years
- information on how to become a Disability Confident Leader

4.3.3 Level 3: Disability Confident Leader

By stepping up to become a Disability Confident Leader, you'll be acting as a champion within your local and business communities.

To reach this level you'll need to:

- have your self-assessment validated from outside your business
- show what you have done as a Disability Confident Leader

Once you're recognised as a Disability Confident Leader, you'll be sent:

- a certificate in recognition of your achievement
- a badge for your website and other materials for 3 years

Find out how to [sign up to the Disability Confident scheme and get the Disability Confident symbol](#).

5. Advice on specific conditions

5.1 Mental health conditions

Mental Health conditions cover a wide range of illnesses which can affect how people feel, think and behave. They can include:

- depression
- anxiety
- bipolar disorder



According to the Mental Health Foundation, 1 in 4 people experience a problem with their mental health every year. It's likely you will at some point employ someone with a mental health condition. Being in work can improve someone's mental health. With understanding and support from an employer, there is no reason that someone with a mental health condition cannot succeed in the workplace.

Adjustments for employees with a mental health condition include:

- offering flexible working patterns, including changes to start and finish times and adaptable break times
- changing their working environment, for example providing a quiet place to work
- working with them to create an action plan to help them manage their condition
- allowing them leave to attend appointments connected with their mental health

For more information and support visit:

- [Mind](#)
- [SANE](#)
- [Time to Change](#)

5.2 Hearing impairment

Someone with a hearing impairment may have:

- partial or complete hearing loss
- had their impairment from birth or it may have increased gradually over time
- a temporary or permanent impairment

The proportion of people with a hearing impairment who are in work is below the national average. However, there are many people with a hearing impairment who are in work and even more who would like the opportunity to be in work.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) has developed a [collection of resources](#) with the Department for Education (DfE) to support the transition young people with a hearing impairment make into employment. These resources include a personal profile template for young people to complete about their working environment needs, an employer handbook and short videos aimed at young people, parents and employers.

Adjustments for an employee with a hearing impairment include:

- providing information in accessible formats
- seating an employee in a quiet area, away from distracting noises
- using adapted telephones with adjustable volumes and lights

For more information and support visit:

- [Action on Hearing Loss](#)
- [British Deaf Association](#)

- [UK Council on Deafness](#)

5.3 Visual impairments

There are almost 80,000 registered blind and partially sighted people of working age in the UK (not including conditions which can be corrected by glasses or contact lenses). The majority have some useful vision. They represent a huge pool of potential employees.

Advances in technology mean that blind and partially sighted people can now overcome many of the barriers to work that they faced in the past. With the right training, skills and experience a blind or partially sighted person can do just about any job. Just like any other worker, they will need the right tools to do the job, for example additional tools that reduce or eliminate the need for eyesight.

Adjustments for a blind or partially sighted employee include:

- offering additional training about visual impairments for other colleagues
- making alterations to the working environment
- supplying documents in audio or Braille formats
- carrying out a risk assessment of the workplace
- arranging a tour of the workplace
- providing software or technology that magnifies onscreen text and images or converts text to sound

For more information and support visit the [RNIB](#).

5.4 Physical impairments

A physical impairment is one which limits a person's ability to do physical activity such as walking. These impairments may be as a result of:

- amputation
- cerebral palsy
- injury
- muscular dystrophy
- multiple sclerosis

Some physical impairments may not be visible such as epilepsy or respiratory disorders.

Many people with physical impairments have mobility aids to assist them. You may only need to take a few simple steps to ensure an employee with a physical impairment can fulfil their potential at work.

Adjustments for a physically impaired employee include:

- providing assistive computer equipment such as modifications to hardware or voice activated software
- agreeing an emergency evacuation procedure with them if they require assistance



- making sure that the layout of the working environment is accessible and free from obstructions

For more information visit:

- [Cerebral Palsy](#)
- [Leonard Cheshire Disability](#)
- [Muscular Dystrophy UK](#)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society](#)

5.5 Hidden impairments

Hidden impairments are conditions that are not apparent to others. They are thought to affect 10% to 15% of the population. They include:

- autistic spectrum conditions (ASCs)
- dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyscalculia
- learning disabilities

Autistic spectrum conditions (ASCs)

In the UK, half a million adults are thought to have an ASC. They may have difficulties with:

- communication
- understanding the feelings of others
- meeting new people
- adapting to change and new routines

People with an ASC may also have high levels of accuracy, attention to detail and a good memory for figures.

Adjustments for an employee with an ASC include:

- maintaining a structured working environment and routine
- avoiding language which is hypothetical or abstract
- avoiding making statements which could be taken literally

For more information and support visit:

- [Autism Alliance UK](#)
- [Autism Plus Autism Plus](#)
- [The National Autistic Society](#)

Dyslexia

About 10% of the UK population are thought to be affected by dyslexia. Even where literacy skills have been mastered, people with dyslexia have difficulties with reading efficiently and spelling. They may struggle with tasks such as:



- organisation and time-management
- writing or structuring documents
- retaining information (without written back-up)
- note taking in meetings
- working under pressure of time

Potential strengths of people with dyslexia include creative and innovative thinking and good communication skills.

Adjustments for an employee with dyslexia include:

- providing text-to-speech or speech-to-text software
- allowing meetings to be recorded
- giving instructions verbally
- providing written information on coloured paper

For more information and support visit:

- [Dyslexia Action](#)
- [British Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Dyslexia Adult Network \(DAN\)](#)

Dyspraxia (developmental co-ordination disorder)

Co-ordination difficulties associated with dyspraxia (DCD) can affect many areas of everyday life, such as learning to drive or ride a bicycle and acquiring fluent word processing skills. Some people with dyspraxia appear clumsy, with weak muscle tone. They may also have poor social skills and come across as abrupt. Dyspraxia also affects the ability to organise ideas, language and information.

Tasks with the following elements are challenging for people with dyspraxia:

- sequencing, organisation, time-management and prioritising
- managing change and coping in unfamiliar situations
- extracting information from charts or diagrams and following maps
- learning new skills
- working at speed or to deadlines

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is often associated with specific learning difficulties and a range of mental health issues. People with ADHD show signs of inattention, impulsivity, over-activity and restlessness.

Difficulties in the following areas characterise ADHD:

- poor listening skills and being easily distracted
- difficulties maintaining attention, concentration and focus



- problems with planning, organisation and time-management
- talking excessively, interrupting or intruding on others
- problems with controlling and switching their attention as needed, for example starting, switching or finishing tasks and activities
- failure to take account of feedback
- poor self-regulation of actions and emotions

Dyscalculia

Dyslexia and dyspraxia may affect numeracy skills but the term dyscalculia refers to more severe difficulties with numeracy and concepts involving numbers. It affects around 5% of the population.

People with dyscalculia struggle in the following areas:

- handling money, budgeting and dealing with finances
- time-telling, such as recording times, dates and appointments correctly
- using pin numbers and dialling phone numbers
- remembering personal information, like date of birth, addresses and post codes
- travelling and directions, reading road numbers and making sense of timetables

Learning disabilities

It is estimated that up to 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability. They may have difficulties learning new skills and coping independently with everyday tasks.

Many people with a learning disability are in work and with the right support can be hard-working and reliable employees.

Adjustments for an employee with a learning disability include:

- altering the recruitment process to allow work trials instead of formal interviews
- using supported employment providers to offer in work support to help learn a role
- providing information in accessible formats

For more information and support visit:

- [British Institute of Learning Disabilities](#)
- [Mencap](#)

5.6 Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a condition that affects the brain. When someone has epilepsy, it means they have a tendency to have epileptic seizures.

Anyone can have a one-off seizure, but this doesn't always mean they have epilepsy. Epilepsy is usually only diagnosed if someone has had more than one seizure, and doctors think it is likely they could have more.



Epilepsy can start at any age and there are many different types. Some types of epilepsy last for a limited time and the person eventually stops having seizures. For many people epilepsy is a life-long condition.

For more information and support visit:

- [Epilepsy Action](#)

5.7 Stammering

Stammering is hard to define even though everyone knows it when they hear it. Stammering is typically recognised by a tense struggle to get words out, characterised by repetition or prolongation of sounds, and silent blocks (known as 'overt stammering'). However, many people who stammer have developed techniques to hide it (known as 'covert stammering').

We know that stammering has no influence on someone's intelligence or abilities. However, personal experiences can affect educational attainment, career choice, professional success and even mental health.

Stammering varies tremendously from person to person and is highly variable for the person who stammers. They may be fluent one minute and struggling to speak the next.

Stammering affects about 500,000 adults in the UK, including 380,000 adults of working age.

For more information and support visit:

- [The British Stammering Association](#)

6. Guidance from other organisations

The [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(Acas\)](#) provides free advice for employers on employment legislation including advice on age and the workplace.

The [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) promotes and monitors human rights. It protects, enforces and promotes equality across 9 areas: age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

The [Business Disability Forum \(BDF\)](#) is an employer organisation that offers information, support and advice on disability as it affects business. It can help employers to make sure that their online recruitment tools and processes are fully accessible for disabled people.

[Clear Talents](#) can help organisations identify and manage reasonable adjustments for job applicants, employees and students. It is free to use for applicants.

The [British Association for Supported Employment \(BASE\)](#) is the national trade association involved in securing employment for disabled people. The website offers guidance for



employers on disability and work. BASE members work closely with disabled jobseekers and employers to help find sustainable work for the disabled person.

[The Disability Action Alliance](#) brings together disabled people's organisations with other organisations to work in partnership to change the lives of disabled people.

[Vercida](#) is a place for the diversity industry, employers, and jobseekers to communicate. The site brings together the best of what the industry has to offer with a broad range of views from employers, jobseekers, and diversity policy makers.

[The Mental Health Foundation](#) is a leading mental health charity for research, policy and improving services. It offers a range of training and courses for individuals and employers.

[Remploy Employment Services](#) provides wide ranging support to help employers to recruit and retain talented and motivated disabled people.

The [Do It Profiler](#) has resources for employers to help them to understand specific learning disabilities and their relevance to the workplace.

[Richard Shakespeare](#) is an independent Disability Consultant who provides advice, support and training to employers on all aspects of disability awareness. Richard and his team can provide both face to face training and online courses in subjects such as disability awareness, mental health and equality and diversity.

7. Toolkits

[Clear Kit](#) is an online, free toolkit, by [The Clear Company](#). They help recruiters, employers and education providers understand what they need to do when attracting, recruiting and retaining disabled people.

The Business Disability Forum [Disability Standard criteria](#) (log in required) highlights business areas to consider to meet the needs of disabled people as customers, employees and stakeholders.

The [Age Action Alliance employer toolkit](#) has guidance for managers of older workers across all business sectors.