



## Guidelines for Recruiting People with Disabilities<sup>4</sup>

This checklist is a guideline to improve practices during recruitment, so that disabled people are not discriminated against, and can be assessed on merit and/or their potential contribution.

This checklist will be useful for everyone involved in recruitment, and for those training people responsible for recruitment. The checklist can be used either during policy decision-making, or on a day-to-day basis.

The checklist is not meant to be comprehensive, and is not designed for a specific industry or organisation. You will need to consider specific requirements that are suitable for your own situation in order to enhance the accessibility and inclusiveness of your recruitment processes.

**Become disability confident as an employer:** encourage every member of staff to become more in disability confident. Conduct high-quality training, including managers, reception and security. Provide detailed training for written specifications, shortlisting and sifting; as well as to those who interview candidates. Ensure accessibility. Provide disability "experts", preferably with personal experience of disability, either within the organisation or from a specialist external partner. Use communications, media, networks and other channels to proactively search for candidates from the disabled communities.

### Designing job roles

- Ensure that job descriptions, advertisements, e-recruitment and applicant specifications do not discriminate.
- Always use competency-based job specifications, advertising, assessments, and interview techniques.
- Consider the demands which will be placed on the prospective employee in terms of workload, skills and their capability to do the job given work patterns and environment
- Consider what control the employee has over the role. Be flexible.
- When designing a job role consider the employee's relationship to the rest of the organisation and ways in which their role may interact with others
- If there is some reason to think they might be more at risk in a particular job because of their impairment then others are, conduct a risk analysis to identify areas where a role may require additional, specific support.

### Writing job descriptions and person specifications.

- Criteria: advertisements, job descriptions and specifications must not needlessly exclude disabled candidates.
- Carefully consider and then group job criteria into categories such as essential and desirable.
- Concentrate on what is to be achieved in the job role, Not how it should be done.

<sup>4</sup> Employers' Forum on Disability, UK.



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- Consider alternative means. For instance if you require type written reports, can this be achieved through the use of voice-activated software? Do not say that touch typing is a necessity.
- When considering job-related travel, avoid discriminatory descriptions, such as 'Must have driving licence' (unless this is necessary). Public transport can be considered as an alternative.
- Qualifications and experience need be considered more flexibly. Academic qualifications achieved by a person with a learning disability may be inconsistent with your initial assessment, even though their competencies may be adequate.
- Avoid requiring competencies which apply to every position in your organisation. "The candidate will be a team player" may discriminate against individuals with Asperger's syndrome, especially if the role in question does not expressly require team working as a core competence.
- Avoid future employment problems at the outset by clearly describing all aspects of the scope.
- Clearly describe the purpose, tasks and responsibilities attached to a role.
- Describe how role contributes to the overall aims of the organisation.
- Focus on what is to be achieved and how it is to be done.
- Explicitly describe the management and reporting processes.
- Ensure expectations are reasonable in relation to training and resources.
- Assess inherent risks and put in place support mechanisms for a successful candidate, before or when appointed.
- Discuss levels of pressure or responsibility with a candidate. Statements in job descriptions are no substitute, disclaimer or abdication of responsibility in this regard.

### Attracting candidates and advertising

- Include information about your commitment to employing disabled people in your advertising and job vacancy information.
- Promote your commitment to becoming disability confident as a part of your employment branding.
- Multiple, project-based recruitment tends to attract more disabled candidates than single post advertising.
- Use testimonials and include contributions from disabled employees.
- Provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful disabled candidates.
- Use positive wording like "We welcome disabled applicants" or "As a disability confident organisation..."



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- Provide a specific point of contact for people who are concerned about the recruitment process.
- Make it clear that applications can be made in various formats, for instance on disc, tape, by e-mail etc.

### Application forms

If you use an application form, be aware that they can inherently discriminate against disabled candidates. Because application forms provide uniformity, they do not cater for diversity. Here are a few points to consider.

- Try not to make application forms, online registration, or other forms application too complicated. Keep it short and keep it simple.
- Consider providing alternative, accessible, forms of application. Be innovative to get round barriers.
- Carefully audit all questions. Ensure that they are relevant to the position and competencies required. Clearly mark what information is mandatory and what is optional.
- If you do use a standard application form, state that it is a standard form and that some of the answers may not be relevant to the particular position being offered.
- Allow applicants to give details of experience outside the workplace or traditional avenues.
- Use simple accessible language.
- E-recruitment or online recruitment applications are notoriously discriminatory. Take great care when designing or using an e-recruitment tool. Seek advice in this area from a specialist, if there is any uncertainty about the accessibility of a specific tool.
- At the outset of an online application form, make sure you indicate what information will be required so that people can be prepared in advance. Those with various impairments may just give up if they keep having to go to find additional data during the application filling process. Try to indicate how long the process may take.
- The applicant should be allowed to print off the form so they can prepare answers. If possible allow the form to be saved and returned to later.
- Allow applicants to apply in different formats – email, disc, etc. If applicants are capable of applying in a variety of formats then it is reasonable to you to request a preference (for instance you may prefer e-mail to Braille).

### Asking for information about disabilities

Avoid the following:

- **"Do you consider yourself to have a disability?"** Such a question should not be included in an application request, but may be asked in a separate equality opportunity monitoring form.



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State instead:

- **"You may be asked at a later stage if you need us to make any adjustments during the recruitment process. If you wish to discuss any concerns about the application process, please contact [the company's disability access expert]".**
- Include details of the process and you may include examples of the type of adjustments that can be made (for instance alternative venues or provision of aids to accessibility).
- Consider using pre-interview assessment tests and include an explanation of these tests in the application. State your willingness to adjust them where reasonable.
- Ensure that information gathered for the purposes of making reasonable adjustments, or monitoring, is separated from the main body of the application form.

Avoid the following:

- "What is wrong with you?" Or "What is your disability?"
- "How many sick days have you taken in the last year?"

Ask instead:

- Questions that focus on the person's ability to do the job. Personal questions are intrusive, inappropriate and discriminatory.
- Remember that past absences do not predict the future.

### E-Recruitment

E-recruitment is seen as a cost-effective and far reaching tool for businesses. It is accessible to a wide range of potential employees, is relatively cheap and can be systematised with ease. However, it comes at an unseen price in terms of lost talent potential.

E-recruitment creates potential barriers to employment for people with disabilities. For example,

- An estimated 91.5 million disabled people, worldwide, are excluded by inaccessible and badly designed e-recruitment websites. In the UK, an estimated 1.3m of the 6.9m disabled people of working age<sup>5</sup> are affected.
- 75% of corporate e-recruitment sites tested were inaccessible for disabled applicants (Unpublished report - August 2002<sup>6</sup>).

With a few, relatively simple, steps you can remove one of the initial barriers by making your site accessible.

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<sup>5</sup> McKinsey Report - Making E-recruitment Barrier-free for People with Disabilities Building an accessible website

<sup>6</sup> Cornell University Report on e-recruitment, August 2002 (not published)



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### Typically key issues include:

- Images not labeled properly with an alternative text description
- Inconsistent navigation routes including poor hypertext link text
- Inaccessible forms for visually impaired web users who use screen reader software
- Information validation techniques which cause problems with adaptive technology used by disabled people
- Information laid out in tables. For example, job listings are frequently not coded properly for accessibility

This section on accessibility hints and tips explains these problems in more detail and provides solutions on how to fix them. It also gives an introduction to the range of adaptive technology used by disabled people and the key disability groups that have issues interacting with the web.

Consider, with great care, which tools you use for e-recruitment. When done properly, it can cut costs and simplify processes for the Human Resources, recruitment professionals and line managers, so taking time to consult experts about the accessibility of e-recruitment tools can have positive financial and organisational results.

### Employment agencies and the recruitment industry

Ensure that any agencies or consultants that you use, treat disabled people fairly, enabling them to demonstrate their potential. Ask your suppliers for evidence that they are disability competent. Audit their practices and ensure that they will make reasonable changes to ensure that disabled people are not substantially disadvantaged, but are actively encouraged.

- Build an expectation with any agencies you use that they must manage disability in a manner that reflects your organisation's employment branding in this regard.
- Agencies can provide auxiliary aids and services, sign language interpreters or text phones for a hearing impaired candidate, and alternative formats such as large print or audiotape. Remember that most disabled people don't need adjustments -just the opportunity
- Make reasonable adjustments.
- Make agencies aware of your disability confident approach.
- Ask agencies to monitor the number of people they interview who were willing to say they have a disability..

### Selection and shortlisting

- Selection should be competency-based, so more disabled people get jobs based on capability.
- Applicants who are overqualified could be looking for a change of career or backward step due to legitimate disability related reasons.
- Formal education qualifications may not be an accurate indicator of competency, as the formal education system may have thrown up barriers.
- Periods of inactivity may be related to disability.



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- Voluntary work and life experience may have given candidates valuable organisational and creative problem-solving skills.
- If writing skills are not a core part of the role, poorly written applications may not indicate an applicants' competency.

In general, be very careful when using automated shortlisting. Sampling practices can be used to make sure that automated systems are not discriminating against applicants with dyslexia or applicants with gaps in their work history.

### Interviews

- Offer interviews in alternative formats. These could include telephone interviews, text phone interviews for the hard of hearing or interviews by e-mail or in person.
- Try to ensure a fully accessible interview location. If this is not available consider using alternative locations.
- Ask hearing impaired candidates if they would prefer to organise a sign language interpreter, or if you should do so. Make it clear that you will pay for the service. (most do not)
- Be prepared to change the format of the interview (for instance a single interview with the hiring leader as opposed to an interviewing panel), if it makes it easier for the candidate to demonstrate their potential.
- Some candidates may not show their full potential during interviews, so alternative assessment processes, such as job tryouts offer valid assessment data.
- Probationary periods can be offered to see whether a person can do a job with the correct reasonable adjustments.

### Testing

Psychometric and/or Ability testing can be valuable tools during the recruitment and assessment process. Check that any test you use is flexible and that adjustments can be made for disabled candidates. If you are using online testing, check that any software or sites are accessible. Use a quantitative and flexible approach to scoring and make weighted adjustments to scores. Ask candidates if any of the tests are problematic.

### How to interview

Avoid: "How did you get your disability?" Or "What happened to you?"

Ask: "Tell me how you would do this job?"

Do not assume that you will know how disability/individual label affects the individual.

Avoid "What can't you do because of your disability?"

Ask: "The role includes the following requirements [such as lifting a specific weight a specific number of times], what reasonable adjustments would we need to make to provide help for you to carry this out?"



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Ensure that all interviewers have received disability awareness training and understand the process of making reasonable adjustments.

### The job offer

When offering the job, give every candidate an opportunity to discuss any adjustments they may require. There may be many reasons why applicant did not declare a hidden disability - such as diabetes, a mental health problem or epilepsy - during the recruitment process. Some people do not regard their own impairment to be a disability, and may not need adjustments to do their best. Asking the candidate, at this stage in the process, to tell you if they require a reasonable adjustment **and** making it clear that this will not be held against them, avoids a later risk.

### Confidentiality.

Discuss any requirements to disclose information about an individual's impairment and ensure that you have the person's explicit, written and signed, consent to disclose this information. Consider very carefully who needs to know what about an individual's impairment and ensure that only information that enables reasonable adjustments to be made is disclosed. There is no need to communicate medical diagnosis.

### Monitoring.

It may help your organisation to monitor each stage of the recruitment process. Quantitative and qualitative data can be useful in this regard. Ask for feedback after each stage and count the number of people who tell you that they have a disability and how they progress through your processes. Constantly monitor all documentation, online information, and other material for its accessibility.

### Some useful links:

#### Singapore:

**Bizlink** acts as a bridge between people with disabilities, potential employers and businesses. <http://www.bizlink.org.sg>

#### Hong Kong:

**The Hong Kong Labour Department's Selective Placement Division** assists people with disabilities in securing jobs in open employment that best suit their abilities, skills, qualifications and experience, with the ultimate aim of integrating them into the community and helping them to be financially independent. <http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/service/content3.htm>.