

# Removing Barriers to Inclusion

**An Employer Toolkit for Disability Confidence**



**sendme2work**

inclusion within the workspace



# Contents

## Introduction

Introduction	3
About	4
Context and Background	5

## Disability

Disability	7
Understanding Disability Confidence	8
Disability Confident Scheme	13
Disability Confident Organisations	18
Commitment to Inclusivity	19
Practical Implementation	20
Disability Confident Scheme – Report Findings	21
Resources	22

## Concepts

Unconscious Bias	24
Steps to Reduce Unconscious Bias	25
Accessibility	27
Advisory Organisations	30

## Resources

Resources	32
Key Takeaways	34
Your Next Steps	35
Events and Theme Days	37

## Conclusion

The Future of Your Business	38
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## Checklists

Checklist for Improving Recruitment Opportunities for Disabled People	39
Checklist for Retaining Employees who may have Acquired a Disability	40



# Introduction

Welcome to the 'Removing Barriers to Inclusion' -Toolkit for disability confidence - a practical resource designed to help employers like you create an inclusive, accessible and disability confident workspace.

In a world where diversity is the cornerstone of innovation and success, embracing inclusion is not just a choice; it is a strategic necessity.

If you are new to these concepts, fear not; this toolkit is your guide to navigate this essential journey.

In the pages ahead, you will be equipped with knowledge, resources and actionable steps to not only meet legal requirements but also unlock the true potential of your business or organisation.

Start your journey to disability confidence.

**“ I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do. ”**

Ralph Braun



# About

Andrew has an unrivalled passion derived from over 30 years within the field of SEND (Special Educational Needs &/or Disabilities) education and a lifetime of lived experience.

Promoting and enabling inclusion within the workspace, as an educator, he specialises in removing barriers for employers, delivering unique and tailored online training sessions, in-person events and network support workshops. This creates opportunities for employers to develop their own knowledge and understanding on the essential topics surrounding inclusion, accessibility and disability awareness. Hearing from people with first-hand lived experiences brings his training to life, resonates and makes a lasting and memorable impact.

Individualised and tailored coaching development with key members for example, Human Resource Leads, People and Recruitment Managers, Health and Safety Representatives, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Leads and Directors from businesses and organisations has enabled change, started, or built upon a journey towards disability confidence using the governments free flagship scheme.

Andrew is Project Lead for the Department for Education (DfE) funded Internships Work Initiative – Supported Internships, strategically working across Dorset, linking with partners and employers and is chair of the Council's SEND Employment Forum. He is also a wellbeing coach on the Raising Attainment with Wellbeing programme working with senior leadership teams and wellbeing leads in primary and secondary schools and colleges nationally.

Andrew has a love for kitesurfing, paddleboarding, being in nature, walking the dog, cooking from scratch, home-made wood-fired pizza, making espresso coffee and is honoured to have three awesome children.





# Context & Background

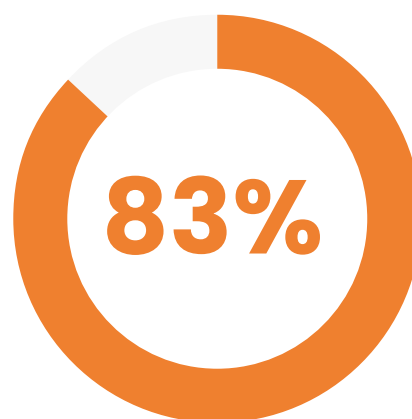
**sendme2work**, led by founder and inclusion consultant Andrew Holland piloted the '**Removing Barriers**' Hub Innovation Project (HIP) in Dorset. This was a partnership with **Dorset Careers Hub** and **Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership** (LEP).

The innovation project was funded by **The Careers & Enterprise Company** who are the national body for careers education in England. They support schools and colleges to deliver modern, 21st century careers education. This is achieved by working in both primary and secondary schools, colleges and with employers to improve careers education and secure better outcomes for young people.

“HIP projects are vitally important to this by fostering innovation for schools, colleges and employers and providing inspiration for students.”

## Aims of the Careers Hub Innovation Project:

- Build the evidence base in careers to strengthen the system and create models for future investment.
- Build capacity in Career Hubs to innovate, test, learn and evaluate.



of disabled people acquire their health condition during working age.

“It has never been more important to support young people in finding their best next step out of the classroom and into the world of work.”

Anyone can become disabled at any point in their life.

An orange icon of a person sitting in a wheelchair, positioned to the right of the text.



The **'Removing Barriers'** Project was designed and created to increase the number of Disability Confident Leaders in Dorset to at least ten. It also sought to increase the number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) gain meaningful, long-term employment. By seeking to work with seven schools and Further Education (FE) colleges and up to twenty young people with an EHCP. There were plans for employers to open their doors, enable activities within the Disability Confident Scheme and offer visits consisting of tours, employer talks alongside a variety of job-shadowing opportunities.

Collaborating with a cohort of ten companies Pan-Dorset across Dorset Council & Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Council areas; which included Small to Medium sized Enterprise (SME) and larger companies, that were not actively employing disadvantaged young people. The aim was to transform these employers into Disability Confident Leaders, by providing inclusion training, education and support to make reasonable adjustments, accommodations and on-site placement profiles. Coaching development enabled action planning, target setting, monitoring and reviewing for employer leads to develop workplace inclusivity.

**Dorset**  
CAREERS HUB

THE **CAREERS &  
ENTERPRISE**  
COMPANY

 **DORSET**  
Local Enterprise Partnership



# Disability

## **What is a disability?**

A disability is defined as a mental or physical condition that has a substantial and long-term impact on day-to-day life, under the Equality Act 2010. A disability encompasses long-term health and mental health conditions.

## **What is classified as a disability?**

The Equality Act 2010 gives rights to disabled people who have, or have had, a disability. The term 'disability' covers both physical and mental impairments that have a substantial and a long-term effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Progressive conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, which initially may have a slight effect on day-to-day activities but are expected to have a substantial effect over time, are covered, as are conditions that have a substantial effect for short periods but are likely to recur, for example epilepsy.

A long-term effect is one which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. Medical or other treatment and aids which alleviate or remove the effect of an impairment are to be disregarded when assessing whether the impairment has a substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities.

HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer, however, are deemed to be disabilities from the date of diagnosis. People with severe disfigurements are also deemed to be disabled by the Act, as are people registered as blind or partially sighted with their local authority or an ophthalmologist.

People who have had a disability in the past, which had a substantial adverse effect on their normal day-to-day activities for a period of at least 12 months are also protected by the Act.

## **Why is the legal definition of disability important?**

There is always a risk of both litigation and loss of reputation if an employer or service provider fails to follow the requirements of the law because they assume that an employee or customer will not meet the definition of disability. Remember that the purpose of a reasonable adjustment is to enable an employee to perform to the best of their ability or for a customer or service user to have access to your services.

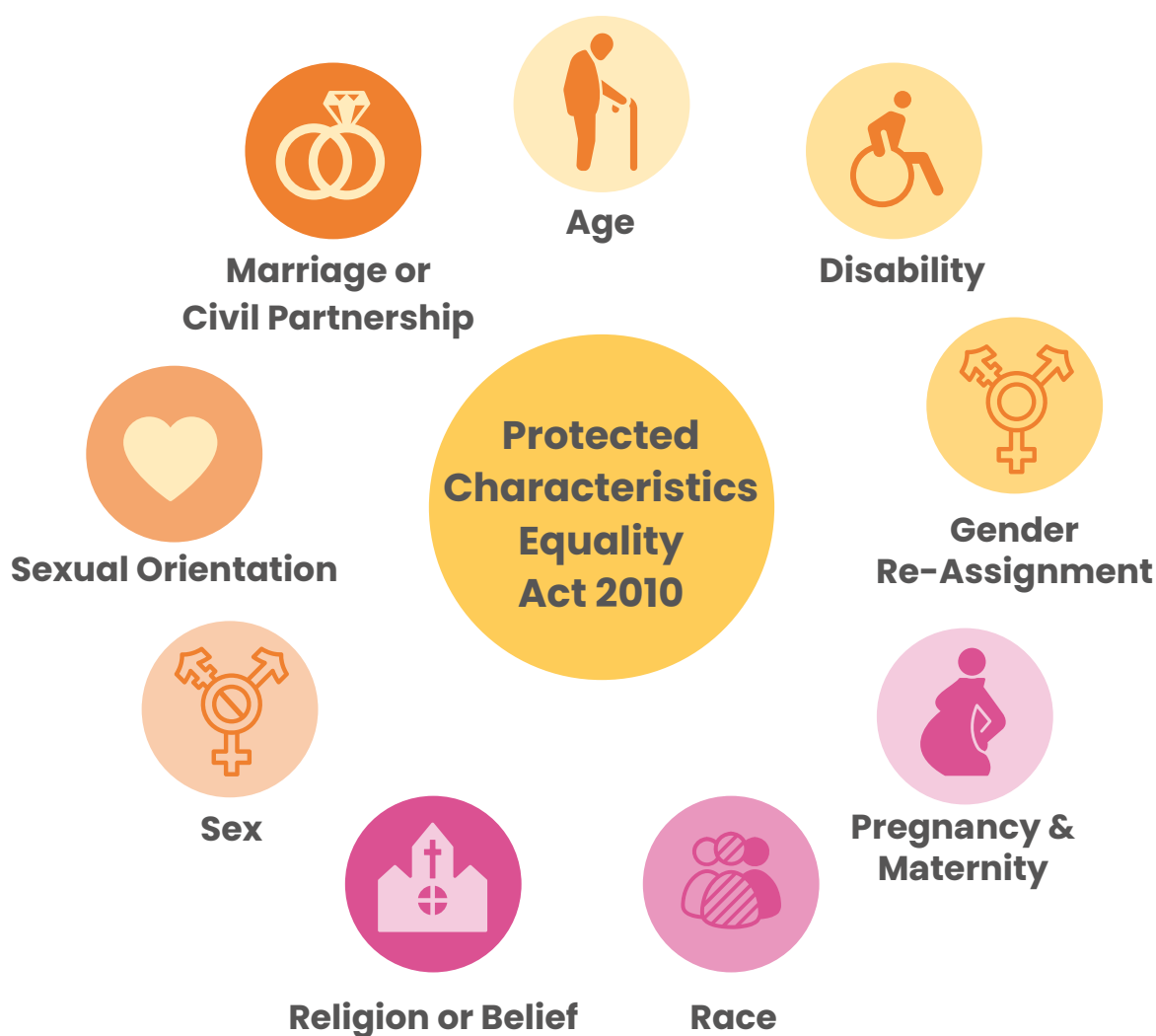
If you are uncertain whether an individual is covered by the Act, you should assume that they are and make any reasonable adjustments that are necessary for them to do their job or use the services you offer.



# Understanding disability confidence

## Protected characteristics

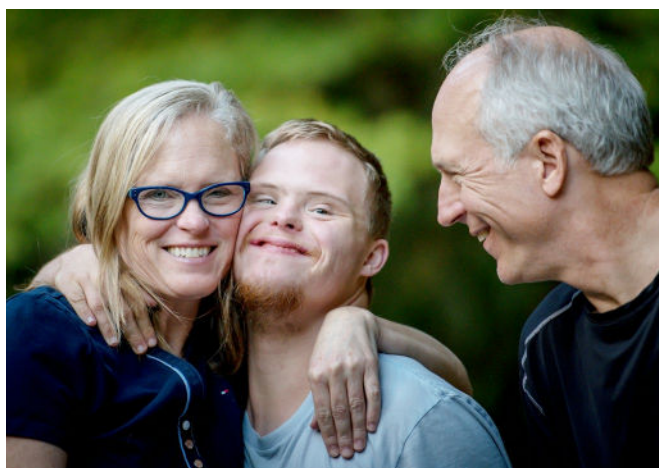
The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination based on certain characteristics. These are known as protected characteristics. They include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This law aims to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of these characteristics, in areas like employment, education and when accessing goods and services.





## Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability says that it is not just a person's disability that causes problems, but also the way society is set up. It is about making sure everyone, including disabled people, can join in fully. In this toolkit, we say "disabled people" to show that disability is more about how society treats people, not just their condition. We use this language to respect and recognise disabled people as individuals.



## Medical Model of Disability

The medical model of disability focuses on a person's impairment or condition as the main issue. It sees disability as a problem within the individual and that the disability needs to be fixed or cured. In this view, the emphasis is on medical treatments or interventions to help the person function better. This model often overlooks the role of society and its barriers in creating difficulties for disabled people.

## Person-first Language

In contrast, person-first language means putting the person before the disability when talking about them. Instead of saying "disabled person," which focuses on the disability, we say "person with a disability" to emphasise that the person comes first, not their disability. It is about respecting individuals and acknowledging their humanity beyond their condition. It is not appropriate for example to use 'blind person' or 'deaf person' in this context. It is important to remember, although this may add further confusion that disability means different things to different people, including disabled people.





## Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is the concept that recognises and celebrates the natural variation in human brain function and behaviour. It encompasses a broad spectrum of neurological differences, highlighting that everyone's brain works uniquely. Neurodiversity refers to diversity in the human brain and cognition, for instance, in sociability, learning, attention, mood and other functions.



## Types of Neurodiversity

This list is not exhaustive, as neurodiversity can include other specific learning difficulties, developmental language condition, anxiety, depression, stuttering, obsessive compulsive condition and other personality conditions.

### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

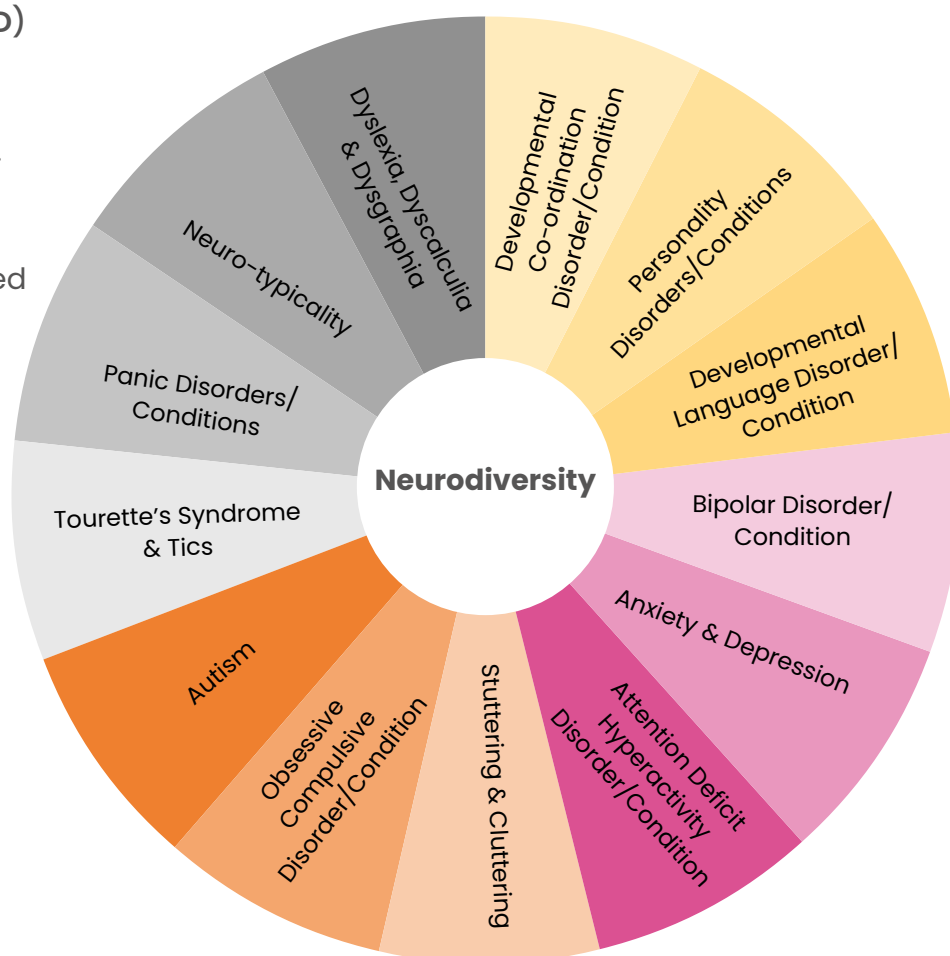
is a developmental condition affecting social interaction, communication and behaviour.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is characterised by difficulties with attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity.

**Dyslexia** is a specific learning difficulty that affects reading, writing and spelling skills.

**Dyspraxia** affects motor coordination and planning, impacting activities like writing and sports.

**Tourette Syndrome** is characterised by Involuntary movements and vocalisations called tics.





It is important to highlight other relevant terminology.

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)** describes fairer treatment and opportunity for all by eradicating prejudice and discrimination.

**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** involves the strategic efforts that aim to enhance a company's reputation through its positive contributions to society.

**Social Impact** refers to the effects on people and communities resulting from various actions, projects, or policies.

**Social Value** is the positive impact generated by an organisation or individual, measured in terms of the contributions to the economy, communities and society as a whole.

**Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)** is a collective term for a business's impact on the environment and society as well as how robust and transparent its governance is.



## The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, this agenda provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and

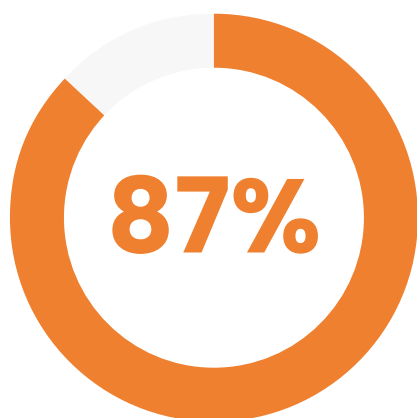
spur economic growth – all whilst tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



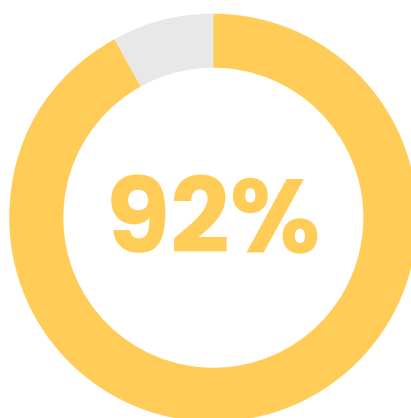


## Business Benefits of Employees with SEND

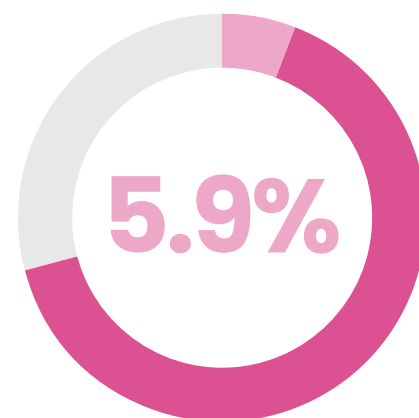
Following a report exploring the business benefits of employing people with SEND (Mencap; 2017), Beyer and Beyer found that:



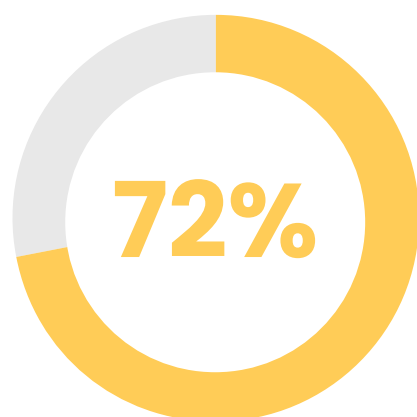
of customers would rather give their custom to organisations who hire a diverse workforce.



think more highly of a company that hires disabled people.



of adults with a learning disability are in paid employment even though over **65%** want a job.  
(Mencap)




Employing a person with SEND can increase staff morale by 72%.

The average cost of an adjustment or adaptation is

**£75**

Employers do not always have to pay the costs, as this is often met elsewhere.



Employers need more people in the talent pipeline and

**1:50**

in UK have a learning disability.

They are

**3.5X's**

more likely to stay in the job role saving recruitment and downtime costs.



An employee with SEND is less likely to take time off sick and are less likely to be late.





# Disability Confident Scheme

The UK governments flagship and nationally recognised scheme for employers, businesses and organisations is free to use. There are currently approximately 20,000 employers registered that proudly display the logo and more importantly demonstrate the commitment to inclusion and disability confidence.

The Disability Confident Scheme launched in November 2016 by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It aims to give employers the techniques, skills and confidence that they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled people including those with long-term health conditions.

## Levels of Participation

The scheme has three levels that enable employers to start on their journey towards disability confidence, these are:

### Disability Confident Committed (Level 1):

Employers sign up to the scheme via **gov.uk** where they agree to five Disability Confident commitments:

#### Ensure your recruitment process is inclusive and accessible

- Ensure against discrimination.
- Make job adverts accessible.
- Provide information in accessible formats (e.g. large print).
- Accept applications in alternative formats (e.g. electronically).

#### Offer an interview to disabled people

- Encourage applications from disabled people by offering them an interview if they meet the minimum criteria for the job (this is the description of the job set by the employer).

#### Communicate and promote vacancies

- Advertise vacancies through a range of communication channels.
- Get advice from Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme providers and local disabled people's user-led organisations.
- Review current recruitment processes.

#### Anticipate and provide reasonable adjustments as required

- Make sure disabled people are not at a disadvantage when applying for and doing their jobs.



**Support any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work**

- Retaining an employee who has acquired a disability means keeping their valuable skills and experience and saves on the cost of recruiting a replacement.

**Employers also agree to carry out at least one 'activity' from a list of nine that will make a difference to disabled people:**

- Work-experience.
- Work trials.
- Paid employment (permanent or fixed term).
- Apprenticeships.
- Job shadowing opportunities.
- Traineeships (only now offered locally).
- Paid internships or supported internships.
- Student placements.
- Sector-based Work Academy Placements (SWAP).

**Disability Confident Scheme Activity Resources**

Here is a selection of resource activities to assist when planning for the activities to take place, as part of the Disability Confident Scheme requirements.

***Supported Internships***

***[www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)***

***[www.base-uk.org/inclusive-apprenticeships](http://www.base-uk.org/inclusive-apprenticeships)***

***[www.base-uk.org/home](http://www.base-uk.org/home)***

***[www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)***

***[amazingapprenticeships.com](http://amazingapprenticeships.com)***

***Sector-based Work Academy Placements (SWAP).***

***[resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk](http://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk)***

***[resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/supporting-employers-working](http://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/supporting-employers-working)***



## Disability Confident Employer (Level 2):

Organisations at this level complete an action-focused self-assessment document covering two themes and agree to meet all the 'core actions' and offer at least one 'activity' specified by the DWP against each theme.

### Getting the right people for your business – core actions

- Actively attracting and recruiting disabled people to help fill your opportunities.
- Providing a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process
- Offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job.
- Being flexible when assessing people so disabled job applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job.
- Must proactively offer and make reasonable adjustments as required.
- Encouraging your suppliers and partner firms to be Disability Confident
- Ensuring employees have appropriate disability equality awareness.

### Getting the right people for your business – activity

- Advertising vacancies and other opportunities through organisations and media aimed particularly at disabled people.
- Engaging with Jobcentre Plus, Work and Health Programme providers.
- Providing an environment that is inclusive and accessible for staff, clients and customers.
- Offering other innovative and effective approaches to encourage disabled people to apply for opportunities and supporting them when they do.

“ *The restaurant Rick Stein, Sandbanks employed one of our trainees and we're encouraging them to progress through the Disability Confident scheme.* ”





### **Keeping and developing your people – core actions**

- Promoting a culture of being Disability Confident.
- Supporting employees to manage their disabilities or health conditions.
- Ensuring there are no barriers to the development and progression of disabled staff.
- Ensuring managers are aware of how they can support staff who are sick or absent from work.
- Valuing and listening to feedback from disabled staff.
- Reviewing the Disability Confident Employer self-assessment regularly (at least annually).

### **Keeping and developing your people – activity**

- Providing mentoring, coaching, buddying and or other support networks for staff.
- Including disability awareness equality training in the induction process.
- Guiding staff to information and advice on mental health conditions.
- Providing occupational health services if required.
- Identifying and sharing good practices in supporting disabled people.
- Providing human resource managers with specific Disability Confident training.





## Disability Confident Leader (Level 3):

To achieve this level, employers are required to have their self-assessment validated by a third party. Level 3 employers also agree to act as a champion for disability employment within local and business communities and report on the actions they are taking to support disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workspace using the Voluntary Reporting Framework.

- Encouraging other employers in your supply chain.
- Using social media to promote and share good practice on Disability Confident, such as LinkedIn, X, Facebook, blogs and business newsletters.
- Networking with other employers in your industry, through business clubs, local networks and business events.
- Being a mentor, coach, buddy or providing peer support to others.
- Engaging with other local employers to share good practice.
- Celebrating success, for example being nominated for or the winner of a recognised award.
- Being nominated for and/or winning local, regional and national awards for the employment of disabled people.
- Sponsoring or hosting Disability Confident inspired events.

All employers, businesses and organisations start at Level one after signing up to the scheme to become Disability Confident Committed.

To sign up Join us #DisabilityConfident' <http://ow.ly/IW9q30omHF4>

Employers can progress through the various levels, after demonstrating through a self-validation form, the required evidence.





# Disability Confident Organisations...

## **Play a leading role in changing attitudes for the better**

This is evidenced by the simplicity of the Disability Confident logo, that employers have displayed on websites, added to branding and included on signature scripts.

## **Change behaviour and cultures in their own businesses, networks and communities**

Employers have built on or started to have more open conversations, when colleagues feel safe and secure, they have then confidentially disclosed and been more open to talk about a disability. They start to discuss how they may benefit from minor adjustments.

## **Are reaping the benefits of inclusive recruitment practices**

Employers have made amendments to previous policies and adapted practises, so that they are able to offer greater accessibility.

## **Challenge attitudes and increase understanding of disability**

Businesses and organisations are engaging with inclusion training, delivering this internally and benefitting from specialist trainers in their field externally.

## **Draw from the widest possible pool of talent**

Disabled people are attracted to work for businesses and organisations who are Disability Confident. With employers opening doors to the activities suggested within the Disability Confident Scheme, they are gaining experiences with disabled people. This in turn assists with removing barriers to disability along the way.

## **Secure high-quality staff who are skilled, loyal and hard working**

By being creative in recruitment, innovative in your approach as well as addressing the skills gap and labour market shortages. By attracting disabled people or young people with additional needs into your workforce you will have dedicated, committed and hard-working staff.

**Improve employee morale and commitment by demonstrating fair treatment. Simply, who would not want to do this?**



# Commitment to Inclusivity

In today's diverse world, creating inclusivity and accessibility is not just morally right—it is also a strategic advantage. By prioritising these principles, businesses and organisations not only enrich their workplace culture but also unlock the full potential of their staff teams.

## Here is why demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity matters:

### Emphasising Importance

A commitment to inclusivity is not just a tick box—it is a cornerstone of a progressive and forward-thinking workplace. By prioritising inclusivity, companies signal their dedication to valuing every individual, regardless of their background, abilities, or differences. This creates a culture of respect, empathy and collaboration, leading to improved employee morale, productivity and innovation.

### Creating Accessible Environments

Accessibility is not just about physical accommodations; it is also about creating environments where everyone can thrive. From providing reasonable adjustments and accommodations for disabled individuals to ensuring digital platforms are accessible to all. Businesses that prioritise accessibility demonstrate their dedication to removing barriers and enabling equal opportunities for every employee.



### Examples of Success Stories

*By implementing Disability Confident principles, Business A transformed its workplace environment. They provided specialised training for managers on disability awareness and inclusion, revamped their recruitment processes to be more inclusive and made physical adjustments to the workspace to accommodate disabled employees. As a result, they saw a significant increase in employee satisfaction, retention rates and overall productivity.*

*Recognising the importance of accessibility, Business B invested in making their digital platforms fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. They conducted thorough accessibility audits, updated their website, software systems and provided training to their development teams on creating accessible advertising and marketing. This not only ensured compliance with accessibility standards but also expanded their customer base and enhanced their reputation as an inclusive brand.*



# Practical Implementation

Creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and supported is essential. The Disability Confident Scheme offers practical guidance for employers to champion inclusivity and accessibility within their organisations.

## Here is how you can become a Disability Confident employer:

### Understanding the Principles

Familiarise yourself with the key principles of the Disability Confident Scheme, which includes recognising the value that disabled individuals bring to the workforce, ensuring inclusive recruitment practices and providing reasonable accommodations to enable employees to perform at their best.

### Promoting Positive Culture

Create a workplace culture where diversity and inclusion are celebrated. Encourage open communication and feedback, promote awareness and understanding of disabilities and provide opportunities for disabled employees to actively participate and contribute to decision-making processes.

### Implementing Inclusive Policies

Review your organisation's policies and procedures to ensure they align with the principles of inclusivity and accessibility. This may involve updating recruitment processes to be more inclusive, providing training for managers and staff on disability awareness and establishing clear procedures for requesting and implementing reasonable adjustments.

### Providing Supportive Resources

Offer resources and support for disabled employees such as access to assistive technologies, flexible work arrangements and accommodations to make their ability to perform and succeed easier. Ensure that employees know how to access these resources and feel comfortable requesting accommodations when needed.

### Engaging with the Community

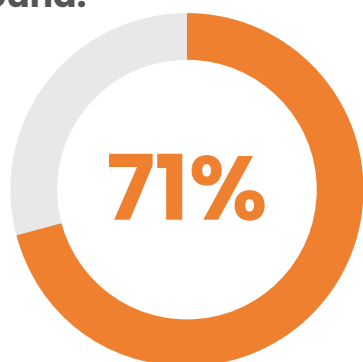
Connect with disability advocacy organisations, support groups and networks to learn from their experiences and perspectives. Engaging with the disability community can provide valuable insights and resources to support your organisation's journey towards becoming more inclusive.



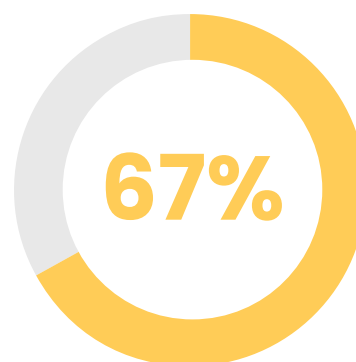
# Disability Confident Scheme: the research findings from a survey of participating employers

In creating inclusive workplaces, understanding employer perspectives is crucial. The Disability Confident Scheme provides valuable insights into employer attitudes and practices regarding disability inclusion. A recent survey conducted in **September 2023** offers updated findings, allowing for a comparative analysis with results **published in 2018**.

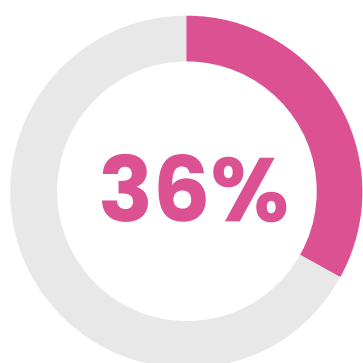
## It was found:



**Around seven in ten (71%) employers** agreed that the recruitment or retention of an employee who is or has become disabled has a positive impact on staff morale.



**Two thirds (67%) of employers** agreed that joining the Disability Confident scheme had a positive impact on their organisation.



When asked whether joining the Disability Confident scheme had any effect on disabled employees disclosing and/or sharing information about their disability, around **a third (36%) of employers** reported that disabled employees were now more likely to disclose and/or share information about their disability.



**Around two thirds of employers** promoted their Disability Confident credentials internally, through their intranet or internal communications to staff (70%) and/or externally, through their website, on applications or through vacancies by using the Disability Confident badge (65%).



# Disability Confident scheme resources

Sign up to become a disability confident employer:

[disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk](https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk)

The Disability Confident Scheme self-assessment tool:

[disabilityconfident.dwp.gov.uk/self-assessment](https://disabilityconfident.dwp.gov.uk/self-assessment)



Learn more about the Disability Confident Scheme and the three levels:

[gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign](https://gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign)

## Further resources:

### Access to Work

[autismandneurodiversitytoolkit.org/definition](https://autismandneurodiversitytoolkit.org/definition)

[cleartalents.com](https://cleartalents.com)

### Disability Confident Line Managers Guide

### Health Adjustment Passport

National Disability Strategy - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

[bitc.org.uk/toolkit/take-a-whole-system-approach-to-health](https://bitc.org.uk/toolkit/take-a-whole-system-approach-to-health)

### Reasonable Adjustments

### Support with Employee Health and Disability



# Concepts

“

*We want to create a culture in which those that may be currently fearful about disclosing any issues they may have, will feel confident in being more open, knowing that they work for a company that wants to embrace all cultures, diversities, disabilities and learning difficulties.*

”





# Unconscious bias

Unconscious bias refers to the automatic, often unintentional attitudes and stereotypes that influence our judgments and decision-making processes without our awareness. These biases are formed through our own individual experiences and upbringing, cultural and social background and our society.

While unconscious bias can affect anyone, it is particularly relevant in the workspace, where it may influence hiring, promotion and teamwork. Recognising and addressing unconscious bias is essential for creating a fair and inclusive work environment where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive.

By understanding unconscious bias and its effects, employers can implement strategies to reduce its negative impact, promote equality, diversity and create a more inclusive workspace culture.

**Affinity bias** is a tendency to move toward people with similar qualities or attributes. This can lead to similar social groups or hiring processes that exclude diverse candidates.

**Confirmation bias** happens when people look for information that confirms their own beliefs and overlook information that goes against their views. This type of bias affects how people collect and perceive new information, but also how they recall and interpret past experiences.

**Conformity bias** occurs when people behave like those around them instead of relying on their own judgment or critical thinking. In a group setting such as a work meeting, people may feel inclined to agree with others' views and ideas even if they have not spent time considering the outcomes.

**Gender bias** occurs when a person is treated differently based on their gender identity or gender expression. At work, an assertive woman might be perceived as 'dominating' whilst a man with the same attributes might be described as 'confident.'

A bias, recognised as **the halo effect**, describes people who think highly of an individual in a certain way, are likely to think highly of them in several other ways. If people think someone is good looking, they may assume that they are also intelligent and charming.



**Micro-aggressions** are discriminatory statements or behaviours that are directed toward a person who is part of a marginalised group based on their race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.

**Implicit beliefs** about people's bodies, such as negative attitudes about a person's weight, size and ability can create workplace environments where employees with different body types or abilities are then made to feel uncomfortable about this.



## Steps to Reduce Unconscious Bias

### **Learn what unconscious biases are...**

Ensure that employees across all levels of your business or organisation are aware that biases exist. Awareness training is the first step to identifying unconscious bias. This enables employees to recognise and understand that everyone possesses bias and allows them to experience identifying their own.

### **Assess which biases are most likely to affect you...**

Take an assessment — such as Harvard's popular Implicit Association Test—to identify which of your perceptions are most likely to be governed by unconscious biases. Armed with that information, you can take proactive steps to address them on a personal basis.

### **Determine how biases are likely to affect your company...**

Biases tend to affect who gets hired, who gets promoted, who gets salary increases and who gets what kind of work. Do an internal analysis of touch points across the employee lifecycle to identify areas where workers may be more vulnerable to biases from their colleagues.

### **Train employees to identify and combat bias...**

Unconscious bias training is an organisational strategy that Learning and Development teams can roll out annually for employees across a business or organisation.



### **Modernise your hiring process...**

To make sure that unconscious biases do not adversely impact hiring decisions, you may need to make some substantial changes. Consider the wording when advertising and recruiting for jobs, so you can draw from a wider pool of applicants. Use this Disability Confident Employer Guidance - Recruiting and Retaining People, as a vital resource to assist..

### **Let data inform your decisions...**

If the senior leadership team in your business or organisations for example, only consists of white men, unconscious biases are determining which employees gain promotion. Make it a priority to diversify your leadership and management teams so that there is a greater representation of society or the local community.

### **Bring diversity into your hiring decisions...**

If your goal is to hire a diverse workforce, make sure that there is diversity among the group of people tasked with recruiting new employees.

### **Encourage team members to speak up about biases...**

The more people there are involved in a decision and the more transparent the decision-making process is, then the less likely a business or organisation will be to be affected by unconscious biases.

### **Hold employees accountable...**

When discrimination is identified, actions should be taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the employees affected. Steps should also be taken to ensure the offender understands the impact they have had on their colleagues and work environment.

### **Create an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy...**

Set goals to make sure that your EDI strategy is embedded throughout your business or organisation, referring to it, reporting to executive, governing or trustee boards to ensure that you make progress towards building a diverse team.





# Accessibility: Integrating Inclusive Technology in your Business or Organisation

In today's digital age, accessibility in technology is not just a luxury, it is a necessity. As businesses and organisations aim to reach wider audiences and provide equal user experiences, integrating accessibility features into technology becomes vital. Here we explain why adopting these practices is vital for the success and inclusivity of your business or organisation, how this benefits current employees, supply chains and customers.

## Accessibility Features in Technology:

Closed captions are text displays of the audio content of a program, movie or video. They are essential for individuals with hearing impairments, but they also benefit viewers in noisy environments or those learning a new language. Using closed captions ensures that your content, especially pieces designed for social media, reaches a broader and more engaged audience.



Alternative text, or alt text, is descriptive text attached to images, allowing screen reader users to understand the content. By providing alt text, you make your digital content accessible to individuals with visual impairments. It also improves Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and enhances the overall user experience for everyone.

Creating Accessible PDFs, webpages and slide presentations, involves structuring content properly, using headings and lists, providing descriptive links and ensuring compatibility with screen readers and other assistive technologies. Accessible documents and websites enable disabled users to navigate and interact with information seamlessly, promoting equal access to information and services.

*“ We were already very conscious of our responsibility to be a fair and equitable organisation for our employees - many staff complete courses as mandatory to ensure we're fully aware of what disability looks like and how people may wish to be treated. So, joining the scheme was an extension of that. ”*



## Why Adopting Accessibility Practices Is Vital

### Inclusive Work Environment

Integrating accessibility features demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusivity within your workplace. Disabled employees can perform their tasks effectively, contributing to a more productive workforce.

### Compliance with Legal Requirements

Many countries have legislation mandating accessibility standards for digital content. By adhering to these standards, you mitigate legal risks and ensure compliance with accessibility regulations, safeguarding your business from potential litigation.

### Expanded Market Reach

Accessibility is not just about meeting legal obligations; it is also about tapping into new markets. By accommodating disabled individuals, you access a sizable consumer base with significant purchasing power, expanding your market reach and competitive advantage. The spending power of disabled people is predicted to be £274 billion a year.

### Enhanced Customer Experience

Accessible technology enables individuals of all abilities to engage with your products or services seamlessly. By catering to diverse customer needs, you enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, driving business growth and profitability.

### Positive Brand Image

Demonstrating a commitment to accessibility enhances your brand's reputation and creates goodwill among consumers and stakeholders. It portrays your organisation as socially responsible which strengthens brand loyalty and supports attracting top talent.



*Now we've reached Leader status, I want to influence other hospitality companies. Together we can make a greater impact rather than just focusing on our own business. We need other businesses on board. We're facing a massive skills gap in our industry but there is so much that can be done to fill that gap.*





## Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Disability

AI can aid disabled individuals by automating tasks, offering personalised assistance and enhancing accessibility. For example, AI-powered voice recognition enables hands-free operation for those with mobility impairments, whilst smart home systems controlled by AI can adjust environments based on specific needs. AI-driven captioning and translation services can improve communication for people with auditory and visual impairments.

### Increased Efficiency

AI can streamline processes and automate repetitive tasks, allowing disabled individuals to accomplish tasks more efficiently and with less effort.

### Personalised Assistance

AI systems can learn individual preferences and adapt to specific needs over time, providing tailored support and assistance to disabled users.

### Improved Accessibility Tools

AI-driven technologies continuously evolve to provide innovative accessibility solutions, such as advanced navigation aids, object recognition and real-time language translation. This enhances accessibility in various environments for disabled individuals.

These technologies break down barriers, create greater independence and empower individuals of all abilities to thrive in the digital world.



*The overriding thing is that we are confident in and we understand the social model of disability and that's how the whole company operates – that's our general ethos. That's the foundation. All our staff get disability and equality training. That happens as a basic and that runs through and underlays everything we do.*





# Advisory organisations

There are a range of organisations who can provide specialist advice and support on disability employment. Here are some examples of national organisations, but there may be other local organisations in your area who can help.



## **British Association for Supported Employment (BASE)**

The national voice for providers of specialist employment support. They promote the principles and delivery of high-quality supported employment services and work to improve the employment rates of disabled people. BASE members work closely with jobseekers and employers to help find sustainable work for disabled people.



## **Business Disability Forum (BDF)**

A not-for-profit, are the leading business membership organisation in disability inclusion. They work in partnership with business, government and disabled people to remove barriers to inclusion. Offering information, support and advice across all sectors to recruit and retain disabled people. Their 550 plus members employ 20% of the UK workforce and an estimated eight million people worldwide.



## **Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei)**

A UK-based, not-for-profit employer network that promotes workplace equality and inclusion of employers. They help employers build and maintain diverse teams and inclusive cultures through their membership, training, consultancy services and information for members.



## **Microlink**

A pioneering technological solutions for thriving in an ever-changing landscape. They empower enterprises with innovative solutions for accessibility, inclusion and cloud integration offering both corporate and education services.



### **Purple**

Purple believe that bringing disabled people and business together will change the conversation from one of disadvantage and inequality to one about potential and value. They provide a range of support services including **Purple Tuesday** and **Enable All**.



### **PurpleSpace**

A professional development hub for disability network group leaders. They are disability confident employees, networks, allies and champions driving business change on disability from the inside out.



### **The Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RID)**

Their purpose is to break down the barriers faced by disabled people who are entering or progressing through the job market. They help recruiters and employers to become disability confident and offer more job opportunities to disabled people.



### **Disability Rights UK**

The UK's leading organisation led by, run by and working for disabled people. They work with disabled people's organisations, public bodies, businesses and government across the UK to influence regional and national change for better rights, accessibility, benefits, quality of life and economic opportunities for disabled people.



*To be that first manufacturer within the area to sign up and have this accreditation. Manufacturing isn't always adapted to accommodate people who may have additional needs. This was an opportunity for us to lead the way and make change. Since we started, we've become quite passionate about it.*





# Resources



## **AbilityNet**

A digital world accessible to all. Our services support a wide range of users. From older or disabled people looking for help with their technology to digital professionals advocating for accessibility best practices within their organisation.



## **Ambitious about Autism**



## **WelcoMe**

Be ready to welcome your customers. WelcoMe is your solution for front-line staff training and support of disabled customers & visitors.



## **AccessAble**

Here to take the chance out of going out and give you the accessibility information you need to find out if a place is going to be accessible for you.



## **Base**

Hosts valuable information on supported employment.



## **Evenbreak**

Offers a job board for disabled candidates and is an online space where disabled candidates can search for jobs with inclusive employers.



*We're now working towards Disability Confident Leader status and that means influencing other companies in the area. We don't tend to work with additional stakeholders, so this means getting out into the community and leading by example.*





### **Careermag for Inclusion**

A digital publication tailored for schools and colleges looking for SEND resources and employers. It provides accessible job opportunities, success stories and aims to create a more inclusive workforce. The magazine offers exclusive career advice and guidance from experts and hiring managers and it is designed to encourage employers to offer workplace experiences to young people with SEND. You can subscribe for free to stay updated with the latest editions and insights.



**SeePotential. SeeMe**

### **Naturally Talented Me**

A Community Interest Company (CIC) set up to help everyone, regardless of background, circumstance, or label to showcase their natural talents to the world of work.

## **RNIB**

**See differently**

### **RNIB**

RNIB offer a **Visibly Better Employer** for employers to become a better and more inclusive employer for people with sight loss by aligning working practices to the Quality Standard.



# Key Takeaways

Congratulations on completing the “Removing Barriers to Inclusion” Toolkit. You have taken the first step on a transformative journey towards creating a workspace that celebrates diversity, accessibility, disability awareness and confidence.

What you have learned here is more than just knowledge; it is the foundation for creating a thriving and inclusive organisation.

Throughout this toolkit, we have highlighted the key points that make inclusion, accessibility and disability confidence vital to your business.

## **Inclusive Workspace**

An inclusive environment welcomes all employees, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or disabilities. By embracing diversity, you unlock untapped potential and drive innovation.

## **Overcoming Barriers**

Understanding and addressing barriers such as misconceptions, lack of awareness, communication challenges and concerns about making reasonable adjustments and accommodations are essential for success.

## **The Disability Confident Scheme**

The Disability Confident Scheme provides a baseline and roadmap to become a more confident and inclusive employer, ensuring you meet legal requirements whilst boosting your reputation.

## **Practical Guidance**

The toolkit equips you with actionable strategies, from inclusive recruitment and employee support to creating an inclusive workspace culture.

## **Real-life impact stories**

Real-life impact stories demonstrate that inclusion is not just an ideal; it is a proven path to business success. The stories of other employers who have reaped the benefits of inclusivity show that you, too, can make a positive impact.

## **Valuable Resources**

Our resource sections connect you to a wealth of tools and organisations to support you on your journey.



# Your Next steps

Now, you may be wondering, “What is next?” It is time to put your knowledge into action and embark on your journey to create a more inclusive, accessible and disability confident workspace. Here is how you can start:

## Set Clear Goals

Define your organisation’s goals for inclusion and accessibility. Identify the specific outcomes you want to achieve.

## Develop an Action Plan

Create a detailed plan that outlines the steps you will take to achieve your goals. Link this to your businesses strategy and embed the self-assessment into reporting and governance.

## Engage Your Teams

Encourage the active involvement of your employees. Inclusivity is a collective effort and involving your team in the process will boost enthusiasm and create a sense of ownership. Include any disability employee networks and groups in your processes to benefit from their insights and experience.

## Measure Progress

Use the checklists provided in this toolkit to assess your progress regularly. Measure your results and adapt your action plan as needed.

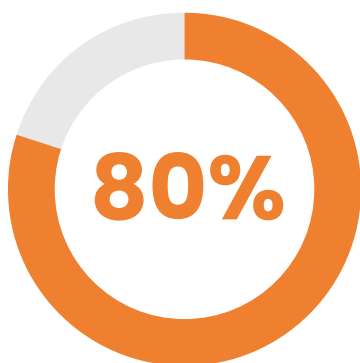


## Seek Support

Do not hesitate to reach out to other Disability Confident organisations, especially those at Leader (Level 3) status. Join available network support meetings and consider a 'buddy' approach, pairing with a similar organisation or become a mentor to those businesses or organisation who are new to the scheme. Share resources and effective training to assist others. The journey toward inclusion is not one you need to take alone.

## Celebrate Success

As you make progress and witness the positive changes in your workplace, celebrate your successes. Recognise the positive impact your efforts have on your employees and your business. There are currently over 15K followers on the Disability Confident LinkedIn group, connect with others and take the lead on hosting disability awareness events.



of disabled people have non-apparent (hidden or invisible) disabilities



of disabled people use a wheelchair



*As part of our new status as a Disability Confident Leader, we must be seen – and we want to be seen – to support, inspire and influence our suppliers to look at their own workforce. Our goal is ultimately to support our trainees to enter the workplace, it's in our interest to be looking at what other suitable employers are out there for them to join.*





# Events and theme days

Get you and your business or organisation started to help raise disability awareness internally as well as externally, to influence your supply chains and customers. Do not forget to use social media and communication channels to promote and enhance your reputation further.

**World Cancer Day** – 4th February

**International Epilepsy Day** – 12th February

**World Down Syndrome Day** – 21st March

**National Supported Internship Day** – 27th March

**World Autism Awareness Day** – 2nd April

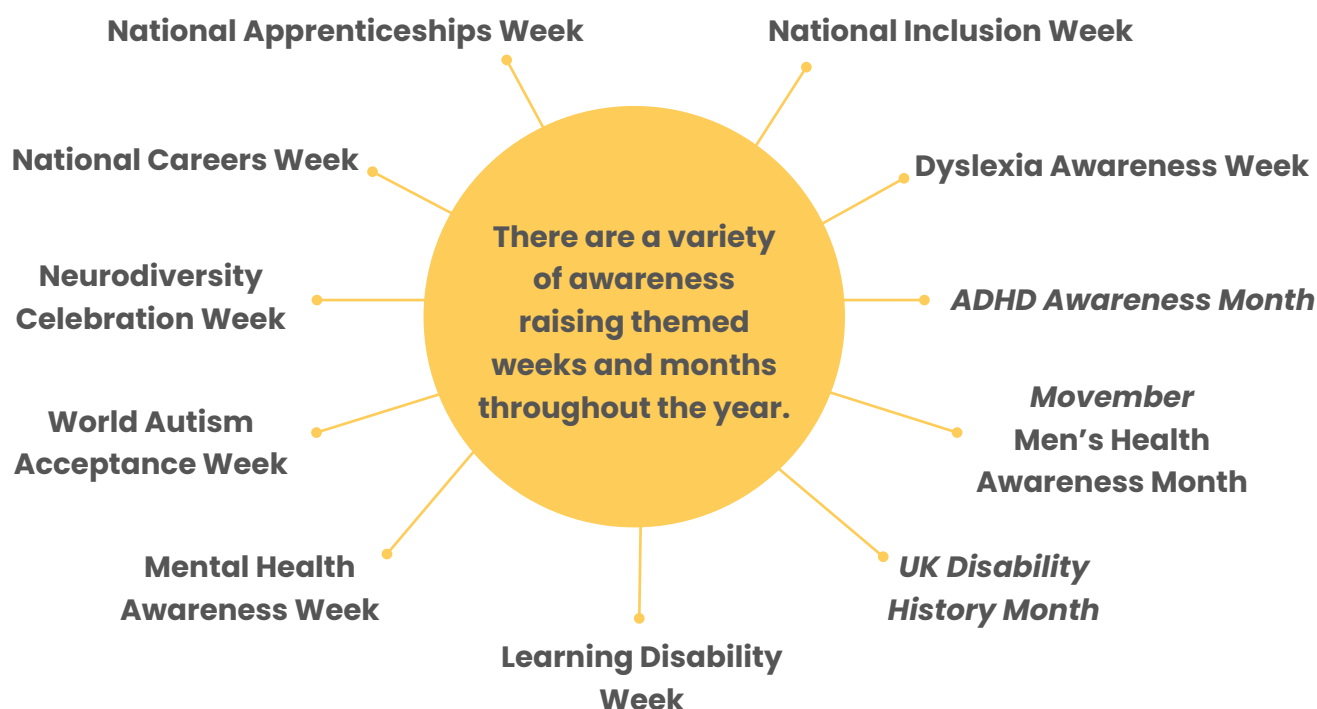
**World Health Day** – 7th April

**Global Awareness Accessibility Day** – 16th May

**World Mental Health Day** – 10th October

**World Diabetes Day** – 14th November

**International Day of People with Disabilities** – 3rd December





# Conclusion

## The Future of Your Business

Your commitment to inclusion, accessibility and disability confidence is not just a noble journey; it is a strategic decision that will set your business on a path to growth, resilience and success. You are not only removing barriers; you are building a stronger, more vibrant and dynamic organisation – solving recruitment and retention issues as you progress.

Your journey is unique and there will be challenges along the way. Remember that every step you take towards a more inclusive workspace brings you closer to a better future for your business or organisation and most importantly, your employees. The benefits you reap will extend far beyond your bottom line, positively impacting the lives of those you employ and serve.

Thank you for taking this bold and transformative step. We wish you the absolute best on your journey to create a

more inclusive, accessible and disability confident organisation.

Start your journey to success today with **“Removing Barriers to Inclusion.”**

“ *Corporate social responsibility is measured in terms of businesses improving conditions for their employees, shareholders, communities and environment. But moral responsibility goes further, reflecting the need for corporations to address fundamental ethical issues such as inclusion, dignity and equality.* ”

Klaus Schwab,  
Founder of the World Economic Forum

## Sources

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[gov.uk/government/collections/disability](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability)



# Checklist for improving recruitment opportunities for disabled people:

- Accessible Job Adverts:**  
Ensure job adverts are accessible by using plain language, screen reader compatibility and offer alternative formats upon request.
- Inclusive Language:**  
Use inclusive language that welcomes candidates of all abilities and avoids terms that may unintentionally exclude or stigmatise.
- Accessible Application Process:**  
Provide alternative application methods such as email or phone for candidates who may face barriers with online forms.
- Disability Disclosure:**  
Encourage voluntary disclosure of disabilities, ensuring candidates feel comfortable sharing information without fear of discrimination, ask the question and be open to have a conversation about how to assist.
- Reasonable Adjustments and Accommodations:**  
Clearly communicate your organisation's commitment to providing reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process and in the workspace.
- Accessible Interviews:**  
Offer flexible interview formats (e.g. video, phone, in-person, virtual) and enquire about any specific accommodations that may be needed in advance.
- Training for Interviewers:**  
Provide training to interviewers on conducting inclusive interviews and evaluating candidates based on skills and qualifications rather than assumptions about disabilities.
- Diverse Interview Panels:**  
Ensure interview panels include diverse representation, including disabled people where possible, to create understanding and inclusive decision-making.
- Accessible Facilities:**  
Verify that interview locations and facilities are physically accessible and equipped to accommodate any other personal needs. Consider the sensory environment.
- Candidate Feedback:**  
Provide constructive feedback to candidates, focusing on areas within their control, regardless of a disability, to support their ongoing professional development.
- Inclusive Hiring Policies:**  
Regularly review and update hiring policies to ensure they align with equality, diversity and inclusion practices, including specific provisions for accommodating disabilities.
- Community Engagement:**  
Collaborate with disability advocacy organisations and community groups to broaden the talent pool, enhance outreach efforts and early careers programmes.
- Continuous Improvement:**  
Gather feedback from candidates and disabled employees to identify areas for improvement and refine recruitment processes accordingly.
- Data and Monitoring:**  
Establish data collection to track the representation of disabled individuals in the applicant pool, interview stage and within the organisation.
- Promoting Disability Inclusion:**  
Actively promote the organisation's commitment to disability inclusion through public statements, partnerships, social media channels and by highlighting any success stories.

**This checklist serves as a starting point for creating a more inclusive recruitment process and enabling a workspace culture that values diversity in all its forms.**



# Checklist for retaining employees who may have acquired a disability, long-term health condition, or mental health condition:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Flexible Work Arrangements:</b><br>Offer flexible work hours, remote work options, or job-sharing arrangements to accommodate fluctuating health needs and ensure greater work-life-self balance.                               | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Health and Wellbeing Initiatives:</b><br>Implement wellness programmes and initiatives that prioritise mental and physical well-being, promoting a healthy work environment for all employees.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Reasonable Adjustments and Accommodations:</b><br>Provide necessary adaptations in the workspace to support employees in performing their job duties effectively and comfortably.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Flexible Leave Policies:</b><br>Provide flexible leave options, including sick leave, disability leave and unpaid leave, to accommodate medical appointments, treatment and recovery periods.                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Regular Check-Ins:</b><br>Conduct regular check-ins with employees to discuss their needs, concerns and identify any adjustments required to support their productivity and well-being.   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Peer Support Networks:</b><br>Facilitate peer support networks or employee resource groups where disabled individuals can connect, share experiences and offer mutual support.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Training and Awareness:</b><br>Provide training to managers and colleagues on disability awareness, including common accommodations and communication strategies to create an inclusive work environment.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Conflict Resolution Procedures:</b><br>Establish transparent procedures for resolving conflicts or addressing concerns related to disability accommodations or workplace accessibility.                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):</b><br>Offer access to EAPs and mental health resources, providing confidential support for employees navigating health challenges or experiencing stress.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Performance Evaluation:</b><br>Conduct fair and objective performance evaluations, focusing on employees' contributions, skills and achievements rather than their health status or disabilities.                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Career Development Opportunities:</b><br>Offer opportunities for career advancement, continuing professional development and skill-building initiatives, ensuring disabled employees have equal access to growth opportunities. | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Workplace Adjustments:</b><br>Continuously assess and make necessary adjustments to the work environment, tasks, or processes to remove barriers and promote inclusion for disabled employees.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Accessible Facilities and Technology:</b><br>Ensure workplace facilities and technology are accessible to accommodate disabled employees including ergonomic workstations, assistive equipment and technology.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Promoting Work-Life-Self Balance:</b><br>Encourage a culture that values work-life balance and self-care, recognising that managing health conditions may require employees to prioritise their own well-being at times. |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Celebrating Diversity:</b><br>Celebrate diversity and inclusion initiatives within the organisation, highlighting the contributions and achievements of disabled employees as integral members of the team.              |

**This checklist serves as a framework for creating an inclusive workplace culture that supports the retention and well-being of employees who may have acquired a disability or health condition.**

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inclusion within the workspace

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