



HOW TO RECRUIT AND SUPPORT DISABLED STAFF IN THE NHS

AN INTERACTIVE TOOLKIT



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- HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT
- SELF-ASSESSMENT TEMPERATURE CHECK

INTRODUCTION

Recruiting and retaining a skilled and futureproof talent pipeline, that comprises staff with the right skills to deliver high-quality patient care, is a key focus for the NHS.

As organisations are faced with increasing supply demand, it's important that the NHS workforce is supported to thrive, and disabled applicants are encouraged to apply for roles in organisations across the country.

Attracting and retaining disabled people and those with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD) requires an organisation-wide approach, underpinned by shifts in culture, and authentic and open leadership.

The NHS can benefit greatly from a diverse workforce that is reflective of the local communities it serves, including disabled people and people with LDD in local communities. This could include those from protected characteristic groups and beyond.

Protected characteristics (outlined in the Equality Act 2010):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Significant benefits to recruiting disabled staff in the NHS:

- strengthened workforce supply – there are currently 6.8 million disabled people unemployed nationally
- increased staff retention and decreased sickness absence
- establishing a local reputation as an employer of choice
- developing a workforce which is reflective of the disabled population the NHS seeks to reflect
- more innovation and creativity of thought within teams
- improved team morale and staff experience
- contributing to the reduction of the national disability employment gap
- improved public health, as we know that the right work is good for wellbeing.

For your teams, departments and organisation, employing more disabled people could mean:



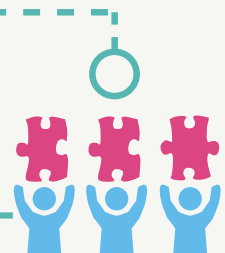
DEVELOP

Smarter use of the apprenticeship levy to recruit and develop more widely.



SUPPORT

More robust support for all staff, including diverse leadership.



SKILLS

The right skills mix exists where you need it most, which will fit the needs of the population through providing generalist, primary care and specialist hospital-based care.



WORKFORCE

A positive culture which improves staff experience and retention.



- HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT
- SELF-ASSESSMENT TEMPERATURE CHECK

WHO IS THE TOOLKIT FOR?

Aimed at anyone who has responsibility for recruitment or line manager support, this toolkit is a step-by-step, interactive guide to ensuring your organisation attracts and retains the workforce you need, including disabled people and those with LDD.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

We know from our work with employers across the NHS, that recruitment and retention go hand in hand. This guide focuses on recruitment practices, workplace support and culture.

The content supports you to plan and set goals by highlighting key areas to work on and encourages you to think about how your organisation supports disabled people and those with LDD.

You can dip in and out as you take on different aspects of recruitment and workplace support.

TOOLKIT STRUCTURE

We provide checklists, goal setting and activities to support your learning and action planning. These will help you to reflect on current practice, identify areas for change and plan what action you need to take.



CHECKLISTS



GOAL SETTING



ACTIVITY



SHARED LEARNING



SELF-ASSESSMENT TEMPERATURE CHECK

Answer the following questions to identify which areas you need to work on to support disabled staff.	Yes, I'm aware	No, I don't know	I have some knowledge
Do you know how many disabled people are in your community?			
Do you know how many people in your workforce declare a disability?			
Do you engage with staff to understand the experiences of those disabled staff?			
Do you offer workplace support for disabled staff to stay at work?			
Do you understand the data submitted as part of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard?			
Is your organisation Disability Confident?			

If the questions have brought up any gaps in your knowledge, the toolkit breaks down complex work and provides the steps to take with colleagues at different points in your journey. This will ensure you establish and embed your approach across your organisation, meaning real culture change will be established.



- STAGE 1 - MEASURING UP
- STAGE 2 - REVIEWING RECRUITMENT PRACTICE

- STAGE 3 - UNDERSTANDING AND MITIGATING THE ROLE OF BIAS IN RECRUITMENT
- STAGE 4 - REVIEWING ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

STAGE 1 MEASURING UP

Robust and accurate data is key to having a realistic understanding of gaps or challenges. We will look at your workforce data now.

Do you understand who makes up your workforce and your local communities? Note down your understanding.



Yes and I have used the NHS Employers Measuring Up tool previously.



Skip to Activity 2



Yes but I don't have any data, and haven't used the Measuring Up tool.



Read on!



No, I haven't thought about this before.



ACTIVITY 1

Run your NHS Electronic Staff Record (ESR) data through our Measuring Up tool and then continue with this toolkit.



Measuring up: your community and your workforce

To begin, you'll need your NHS organisation's postcode

Get started

At the end of your journey through the tool, you will receive a full report which you can use to review the areas where there is the biggest disparity between the groups in the community and the group in your workforce.

Our easy to use digital diagnostic tool: **Measuring Up: Your Community and Your Workforce**, can assist you in understanding what your workforce and your local communities look like.



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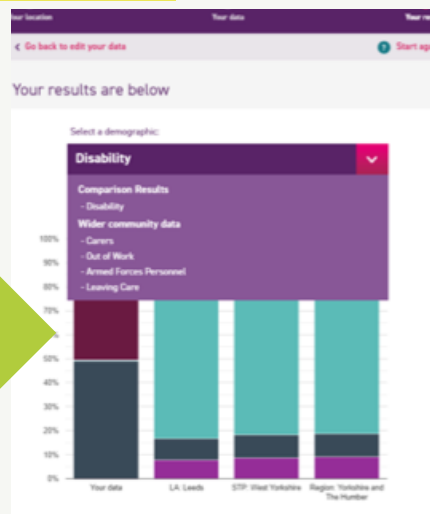
ACTIVITY 2

- Note down the three groups which are largest in your community, but smallest in your workforce.
- What are your current approaches to tapping into or engaging with these groups?
- Note down where there are similarities and where there are differences.

TIP: You could share these thoughts and reflections with your team.

You can use the Measuring Up report to review the areas where there is the biggest disparity between the groups in the community and the group in your workforce.

Those areas could present an untapped talent pool for you to consider.



SHARED LEARNING

Case study - Improving data sharing around protected characteristics

Quality workforce data relies on members of staff declaring that they have a disability. We know that there is often a disparity between declaration of a protected characteristic via ESR compared to the NHS Staff Survey.

Find out how Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust increased its disability declaration rates in this case study. This approach meant the trust could better plan, support, and celebrate its disabled staff.



GOAL SETTING

After reading the Dorset Healthcare case study, identify which under-represented groups you can improve over the next year.

NOW YOU HAVE:

- analysed your workforce
- identified potential talent pools
- considered establishing a stronger talent pipeline.

The next step in the journey is examining how accessible your recruitment practices are in attracting a diverse workforce.



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STAGE 2 REVIEWING RECRUITMENT PRACTICE

Reviewing your organisation's recruitment practices can be a daunting exercise, so we have broken this task into small chunks for you to work through.

ENGAGING HR OR BOARD COLLEAGUES

Your first step should be to communicate the areas of improvement identified (for example increasing the number of people with a disability in your workforce) in Activity 1, in discussion with both HR colleagues and board-level colleagues.

Both departments are key to making sure there is operational capacity and understanding alongside strategic buy-in, and that change can be effective and sustained.

It's important to have HR colleagues on board when discussing the need for implementing change to organisational approach, as they will offer support and guidance to recruiting managers.

Securing buy-in from board-level colleagues around any change to recruitment practice is a powerful tool in engaging staff across the organisation, who will see that this agenda is a strategic priority.

We have produced [guidance and template presentations](#) to support you in having conversations around the inclusive recruitment agenda with these two groups.



ACTIVITY 3

The candidate recruitment journey for use with HR colleagues

If recruiting managers want to make changes to recruitment practice or process, it's important to equip HR colleagues with the rationale for change, and how it can be implemented.

We have produced a handy infographic you can share with HR colleagues. It maps the candidate's recruitment journey from seeing an advert, to their first month in post. The resource clearly shows potential ways to make the process more accessible, which will help establish shared understanding and parameters regarding any change.



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ACTIVITY 4

ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR USE WITH BOARD-LEVEL COLLEAGUES

A useful way to engage with board-level colleagues is to support them to consider how the inclusive recruitment agenda relates to their strategic priorities.

You could produce and present a mind map, like the one on this page, on how a specific organisational value or strategic objective can be fulfilled by supporting inclusive recruitment and workplace culture.

The aim here is to highlight to senior-level colleagues that by not pursuing inclusive recruitment, their organisation's values, or strategic objectives, cannot be fully met. Some key questions to ask are:

- What parts of your organisation/strategy/values align to your mind map?
- What do you think might take precedence when back in the workplace?
- What stands out to you?
- Has this made you think differently about recruitment?



WE WILL NOW THINK ABOUT ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESSES.



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ATTRACTION AND APPLICATION

How your organisation is viewed in the community will have a significant impact on the recruitment of new staff to your organisation. Your public-facing image should represent the diversity that the trust currently celebrates or which it seeks to hold in the future.

Adverts, job specifications and application forms are hugely important in helping to ensure you attract the right talent.



ACTIVITY 5

IMAGES TO ATTRACT

Have you reviewed the images of staff used within your organisation's adverts?

These should be representative of a diverse workforce to demonstrate the organisation's positive culture and to attract future staff.

Don't use images in your adverts?

Instead, you could include statements which show you welcome and celebrate applications from disabled applicants such as the trust's Disability Confident status or any other organisation commitment/accreditation around disability positive recruitment. For example:

- we welcome applications from disabled people and value their life experience.
- our organisation is Disability Confident, and we are committed to offering equal opportunities for all.



GOAL SETTING

Review your organisation's use of the following in recruitment adverts. If you don't find that they are commonly used, have a conversation with HR or the recruitment team about including:

- Disability Confident status
- any other organisation commitment/accreditation around diverse recruitment
- a named contact regarding any reasonable adjustments to the application and recruitment process.





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HAVE YOU HEARD OF EASY READ?

You can use easy read formats to ensure your written information is simple and easy to understand. Easy read is often used when engaging with people with learning disabilities, but it can also be used for other groups.

You can make your application forms, adverts and specifications easy read by:

- using simple words
- including images to support the text
- making it large print
- using plain fonts
- keeping sentences short.

AN EXAMPLE OF A TRADITIONAL RECRUITMENT QUESTION:

- Career history – please complete for the past three years.

AN EASY READ MODIFIED QUESTION:

- Please tell us about the jobs, education or training you have done in the past three years. Tell us about what you did as part of these roles.



ACTIVITY 6

EASY READ REVIEW

Review a recent job advert and specification you have used in a recruitment exercise or one frequently used in your organisation. Consider:

- Could the language be simpler?
- How would someone with a learning disability manage this process?
- Do you use unnecessary jargon?
- Are the documents overly long?



GOAL SETTING

Once you have understood your organisation's current approach to easy read, set a goal to either:

1. Have a conversation with HR around introducing easy read.
2. Review recent job applications, adverts and specifications to see if they could be made more accessible.



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2A - POSITIVE ACTION

As an employer, positive action enables you to support an individual who may have faced disadvantage in accessing employment due to a protected characteristic. Positive action is legal under the Equality Act 2010.

You could take positive action in recruitment in activities such as:

- Holding events to attract specific under-represented groups, such as those with learning disabilities.
- Offering an interview in an alternative format for a disabled candidate. For example, instead of a traditional formal interview, you can invite an individual to carry out the tasks relevant to the role for a short period of time while being assessed. This is known as a working interview.

✗ MYTH
Positive action is discrimination.

✓ FACT
Positive action is legally allowed under the Equality Act 2010



SHARED LEARNING

INFORMATION ON POSITIVE ACTION

You can learn more by accessing our [web pages on positive action](#), which include a podcast, and also by reading this [report on positive action](#) from the University of Chester and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.



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JOB CARVING AS AN EXAMPLE OF POSITIVE ACTION

WHAT IS JOB CARVING?

- Job carving can include redesigning an existing job around the needs of an individual employee with a specific disability.
- It can apply to carving out roles within a team of specialists to free up the time of clinical staff to concentrate more on patient care.
- It can also involve swapping specific duties from a role to make the most of an individual's skills.

A common example in the NHS is where a data entry role is carved among a team of nurses rather than given to one individual. This means that, as a team, they have more time to deliver specialist care rather than completing administrative tasks and paperwork.



SHARED LEARNING

CASE STUDY - BIRMINGHAM WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Over the past five years, the trust has been working with a local school, Calthorpe Academy, to offer carved roles for students looking for employment who may have significant disabilities and have found it hard to access employment previously.

Here are some of the key steps that the trust and the school have undertaken to successfully carve out roles for students.

- The trust works with the school to carry out job analysis, job matching & carve suitable roles when needed, which is an example of positive action.
- The school and trust work together to ensure the school has a clear understanding of the roles available.
- The school maps roles to individual needs and skills, and to parts of existing roles in the trust which students could excel at.
- The trust uses working interviews for applicants, as they test skills and capabilities.
- Jobs can be further carved as the individual's skills and abilities grow.
- The learners are supported with an induction into the workplace, job coaches to train individuals in their roles, and ongoing support inside and outside of work.

A number of paid roles have been carved across departments including fundraising, HR, facilities, ward roles, oncology and audiology. There has been strong support across departments for this approach and an improvement in the quality of patient care.

Now we have worked through reviewing the accessibility of attraction and recruitment, we will now identify what bias is, how to recognise it, and how to mitigate against the impact of bias in recruitment activities.



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STAGE 3 UNDERSTANDING AND MITIGATING THE ROLE OF BIAS IN RECRUITMENT

What is bias? Bias is an unconscious mental short cut which enables us to make efficient decisions with limited information. Our brains use previous personal experiences, values, beliefs and societal norms to form an opinion.

This bias is known as unconscious or implicit bias. It's important to recognise that we all have an unconscious set of bias. If left unrecognised, bias will inform your decision-making and can negatively affect fair judgement, which should always be applied in recruitment practice.



ACTIVITY 7

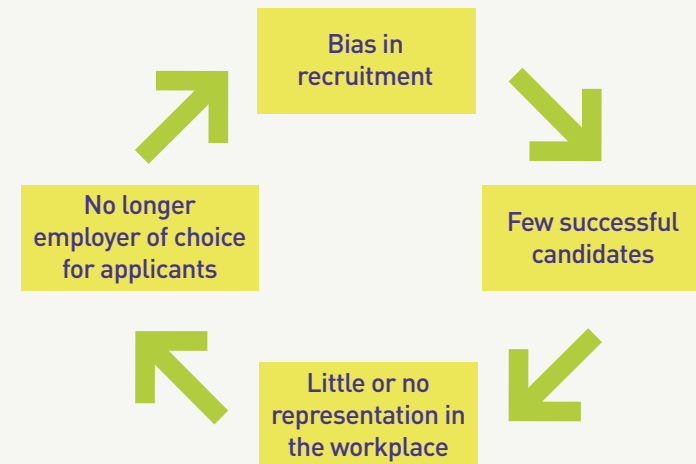
RECOGNISING BIAS

Consider these descriptions and reflect on what you would think if you saw them on a job application:

- has been out of work for 12 years
- has a job coach working with them two hours a week
- has a history of mental health issues
- has a past criminal conviction
- gained their degree abroad.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE THOUGHTS YOU HAD?

Evidence of bias would be if you decided that the individual had deliberately chosen to be out of work for a long period or had been in prison. You could also think that it's a result of having caring responsibilities, as that could mirror your own experience.



- The aim here isn't to remove or deny bias, but to understand its role in our decision-making during recruitment.
- It's possible to mitigate implicit bias during the recruitment process with some simple techniques which we will explore in a later exercise.



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ACTIONS TO TAKE AND WHEN

Here are a handful of tips to get you started on ensuring you mitigate against the impact of bias in your recruitment.

Make it clear who is the first point of contact for any potential applicants. You could establish an 'application buddy' process, where an individual provides additional support to the applicant throughout.

Have open conversations about disability and establish if reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process are needed from the outset. This makes it clear that your organisation values disabled staff and is happy to make any adjustments, such as:

- ▶ hearing loops
- ▶ accessible software for any computer-based activity
- ▶ a wheelchair accessible space for all activities
- ▶ papers in large print and colour filters available
- ▶ access to a computer for any written task, for those who struggle with paper-based activity.

Do not make assumptions and always consider conversations with the individual first and foremost.



GOAL SETTING

Review your current recruitment exercises and consider what changes could be made to increase inclusivity.

INTERVIEWING ACCESSIBLY

Interviews can be daunting for most people. The traditional interview style involves a panel asking a candidate a set of unseen questions, is reliant on strong memory recall, and the ability to apply this thinking to set criteria.

Using this approach to assessment can be challenging for those with anxiety, neurological conditions or disabilities, or those with neurodiversity such as those with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

SHORTLISTING

Ensure there is more than one person responsible for shortlisting.

Anonymise applications to help avoid gender, ethnicity, age or education-based bias.

Use a scoring system based on the criteria given in the application pack. This will avoid any subjective feelings about candidates being part of the decision making process.

Establish a diverse interview panel (including disabled staff where possible) to avoid an individual's bias or preference. Try to include a variety of individuals across an assessment of candidates, for example, using a different panel for a group task and for the interview.

NEXT, WE LOOK AT CHANGES YOU COULD MAKE TO THE INTERVIEW PROCESS.



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STAGE 4 REVIEWING ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

Following shortlisting, the next stage of the recruitment journey is establishing the exercises to assess candidates. These could include:

- traditional interviews
- assessment centres and/ or group tasks
- written tasks.

There are specific ways you can mitigate against barriers and exclusion for those with disabilities/learning disabilities in assessment which we will look at now.

ASSESSMENTS AND TASKS

Firstly, ask or provide an opportunity for applicants to share any needs they have - this is key to understanding whether an assessment process is appropriate for them.



PRE-INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

YES NO

Is the environment relaxed and friendly?		
Is the environment accessible for individuals?		
Do they require any equipment or adjustments?		
Have you explained the structure of the day to applicants and provided a timetable? This is useful if the day has several parts such as a group task, written task and interview.		

DURING THE INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

YES NO

Have you explained the role they are applying for? You could also provide information about the organisation, team and/or department.		
Have you provided a copy of the interview questions to the candidate? The interview should not be a test of memory.		
Have you highlighted any staff networks or campaigns that demonstrate the inclusive culture of the organisation?		



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BEYOND THE INTERVIEW

For those who declare a learning disability, or other neurological condition/neurodiversity, it is crucial that you use accessible language when communicating the outcome of the interview stage.

For successful candidates, you can use this checklist.



MAKING AN OFFER

- Explain clearly that they have been successful in securing the role.
- Ask whether the individual has a notice period to work in any current role or training course.
- Explain the processes which need to be completed from the organisation's point of view.
- Ask the candidate if they have any questions at this point. Explain:
 - that you need to carry out right to work and reference checks (and ensure that they provided the relevant details)
 - how long this process is likely to take and why it is done
 - that you/ a specific colleague will be on hand (provide contact details) to answer any questions they may have at any point.
- You could invite the individual to visit the workplace ahead of their start date. This could ease anxiety and help plan additional considerations such as access needs. If they accept the offer, it would be useful to show them:
 - the space they will be working in
 - communal areas, such as toilets or catering
 - car parking or how the building/office space is accessed
 - introduce them to their immediate team or induction buddy if you have this system set up in your organisation.





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IN THE LEAD UP TO A FIRST DAY:

Prior to a new starter's first day, it could be useful to have an open discussion about the way the individual would like to work. This could include anything from reasonable adjustments within the workplace, or needs outside of work, such as parenting or caring responsibilities.

Make sure that any equipment the individual needs to carry out their role, such as accessible software or a hearing loop, is in place.

Having these conversations at an early point demonstrates that you support disabled staff, and value their work/life balance. You can also ask if they would like any of this information to be shared with their immediate colleagues.

In addition, you could let the individual know how the organisation supports its disabled staff, for example:



GOAL SETTING

Find out if your organisation is Disability Confident and if there are any disabled staff networks in existence.



SHARED LEARNING

VIDEO CASE STUDY - HASEEB AHMAD

This video features equality, diversity and inclusion lead Haseeb Ahmad who is visually impaired. Filmed at Leicestershire Partnership Trust, we find out how his manager ensured that everything was in place for Haseeb's first day.



FIRST DAY/INDUCTION

On a new starter's first day, make time to talk through their role and all aspects of the working environment.

Discuss at this early point if the individual requires any support to be set up through the government's Access to Work scheme.

It is crucial to explain that the individual needs to apply for this, but you could offer to support them in accessing and completing an application. You can learn more about reasonable adjustments in the dedicated section of this toolkit.



- INTRODUCTION
- HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE WORKFORCE DISABILITY EQUALITY STANDARD?

- THINKING ABOUT SUPPORT AROUND AN INDIVIDUAL
- EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

INTRODUCTION



Now we have reviewed the ways in which you recruit the staff you need, we will now move on to examine the workplace support available for those you recruit with disabilities/LDD.

Where staff feel they can thrive at work, you are more likely to see individuals who:

- champion the organisation internally and externally
- remain in your organisation
- have a positive staff experience
- practise high-quality patient care.

Some of what we will cover in this section is specifically for line managers of disabled staff or those with LDD, and other parts look at cultural aspects of an organisation's approach. This part of the toolkit includes:

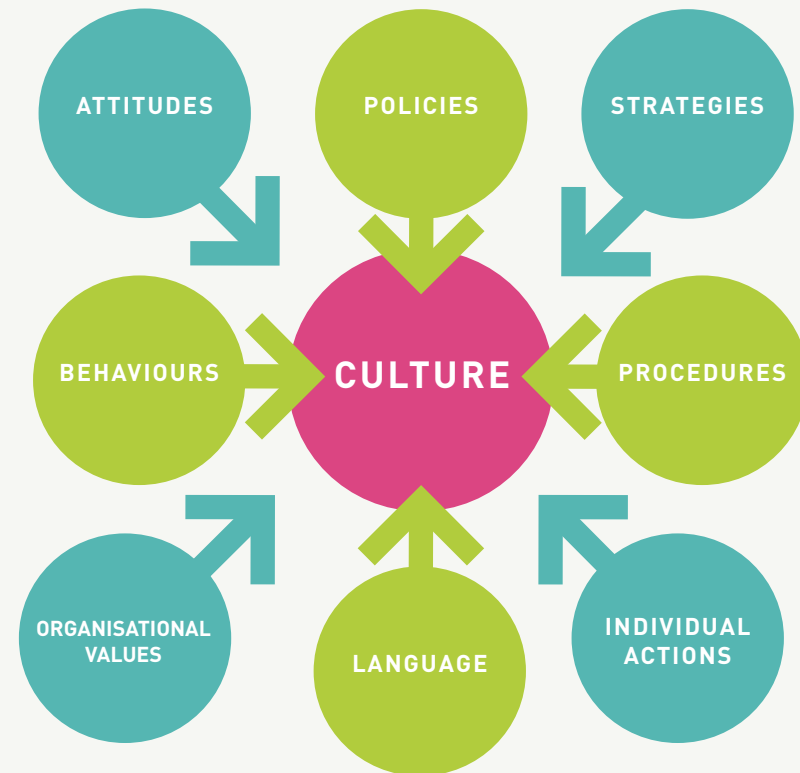
- understanding your organisation's current offer, policy and process for disabled staff
- considering support across your organisation
- having continuous conversations
- data sharing
- establishing understanding across line managers of organisational processes
- workplace passports
- staff networks.

WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT?

Establishing and maintaining a positive work culture within an organisation underpins the positive experience of staff, and the likelihood that it's viewed as an attractive employer to those looking to join the NHS.

Embedding and cascading inclusion throughout your organisation is the first step to building an inclusive culture.

Culture consists of:





- INTRODUCTION
- HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE WORKFORCE DISABILITY EQUALITY STANDARD?

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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE WORKFORCE DISABILITY EQUALITY STANDARD?

The experience of disabled staff is now measured and reported on as part of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) which is legally mandated in the NHS Standard Contract.

Your organisation will be measured against ten metrics specifically focused on this staff group’s experiences. This includes a focus on the recruitment practices of the organisation and how inclusive they are. Ensuring that your organisational culture helps staff to feel supported, engaged and listened to will play a large part in reporting against the WDES metrics.

Access our [WDES guidance](#).

Individual staff and line managers can contribute to the WDES work by ensuring they have a clear understanding of your organisation’s process and policy for supporting disabled staff.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANISATION’S OFFER

We know from our research with employers across the NHS, that a key barrier to increasing the recruitment of disabled staff/those with LDD is line manager understanding – specifically what support and action to take, and the impact of prejudice and stereotyping.

As a line manager, it is vital that you understand the approach taken by the organisation with regards to the support you can offer disabled staff and those with LDD.



ACTIVITY 9

USE THE CHECKLIST TO SELF-ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF SUPPORTING DISABLED STAFF:

	Yes, I’m aware	No, I don’t know	I have some knowledge
Do you know who in your workplace is responsible for co-ordinating or organising workplace support for disabled staff, including reasonable adjustments?			
How to access reasonable adjustments for your staff?			
The sickness absence leave policy for staff with disabilities?			
What kinds of adjustments can be made in your work area?			
How to refer staff to occupational health?			
If your organisation has a disabled staff network?			
If your organisation is Disability Confident?			
How to apply for Access to Work funding and what it’s used for?			



GOAL SETTING

For any areas that you are not aware of:

- find out who is responsible for any areas you are unsure of
- access any policies and be comfortable with their approach
- find out about your organisation’s networks
- learn more about Disability Confident status.



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THINKING ABOUT THE SUPPORT AROUND AN INDIVIDUAL

If your staff member has a disability/learning disability or health condition, taking a holistic approach to their needs will provide assurance that they are within a supportive workplace culture. This section details what support should be made available for a disabled staff member. It's important to have a good understanding of each of these.

WHAT DOES 'GOOD' LOOK LIKE?

Here are three internal departments that can help a disabled staff member:



IT TEAM



HR TEAM



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH TEAM

Each department plays an important role in enabling your disabled apprentice or staff member to do their job effectively.

IT DEPARTMENT

With IT systems being essential for many roles, it's important that staff have the correct IT set up to do their job, which requires the support of your IT team.

Here are three areas where you can help a disabled staff member:

- setting up an initial meeting between your staff member and the IT department
- applying for Access to Work for any IT support needed
- ensuring the workstation is made accessible.





- INTRODUCTION
- HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE WORKFORCE DISABILITY EQUALITY STANDARD?

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ONGOING CONVERSATIONS

It's important to have both early and ongoing conversations with new starters regarding their needs. Ensuring you understand any adaptations or necessary equipment will help them settle in quickly and thrive in their new role.

You can meet with specific staff such as IT and estates in advance but make sure that the individual is happy with this approach before proceeding.

SETTING UP AN INITIAL MEETING

In this meeting, the individual can explain their needs, and the IT team can explain their processes and the equipment that is available. The meeting should cover:

- what the usual IT set-up would be
- if it needs changing
- what steps can be taken to remove barriers and make adjustments.

This will determine if the IT department can provide the necessary software or hardware, or if additional support is needed to put the accommodations in place.

The IT team may already have access to accessibility software and can supply it quickly and easily. Alternatively, they may direct you to a member of the estates team to install a height adjustable desk which may take more time.

This initial meeting should be a part of an ongoing conversation between you and your staff, focused on ensuring they get the right support within the right timeframe.



SHARED LEARNING

VIDEO CASE STUDY – PAUL BELK

This video features clerical officer, Paul Belk. Filmed at Northumbria Healthcare, we find out how reasonable adjustments to his work station and throughout the office helped Paul to thrive in his role.



MAKING THE WORKSTATION ACCESSIBLE

The IT department should support you to ensure that disabled staff are able to:

- independently operate their computer or laptop
- access information they may need online
- communicate on the telephone or via the internet.



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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

The occupational health (OH) department or provider can support you as a line manager by assessing the workplace needs of staff and make recommendations.

For many organisations, OH is accessed via an external partner rather than an internal department, but your HR department can support you to contact them.

COMMUNICATING THE OH OFFER

Make new starters aware of OH when they first join the organisation, so they know there is support available now and throughout their employment.

Key information on where OH can help can include:



REFERRING TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

You can refer members of staff directly to your organisation’s occupational health department and, in some organisations, staff can also self-refer.

You should ask your staff member if this is something they would like to pursue and, if so, explain what this is likely to involve.

Before having this conversation, make sure that you fully understand the processes and steps the individual needs to take that are relevant to your organisation or department. A member of the OH team will be able to explain the process of referral within your organisation.

Following an appointment, the practitioner will produce a report recommending ways that you, the employee and the organisation can address any barriers.



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TRAINING

The support that your HR department can offer could include explaining how, when and why to refer someone you line manage to occupational health, line management skills, or disability awareness training.

HR can also provide more general training to all members of staff about specific disabilities or about changes everyone could make to support disabled members of staff/ staff with LDD.

WORKPLACE SUPPORT

Your HR department may be able to provide specific support such as upskilling you to leave a message on a textphone for someone who uses that method of communication.

HR can also help to create a workplace passport. This document contains key information about an individual that they can take with them if they move between teams or departments throughout their career. This could include information about their disability or LDD, their current support package including any adjustments, and information about their communication and learning style.

This resource can be helpful for staff working within the NHS as staff often move between organisations. Using a workplace passport system is low cost and can reduce stress, administrative work and duplication for both the staff member and their line manager

Access our [template design](#) for a workplace passport here.



HEALTH PASSPORT

ACCESS TO WORK AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

HR departments can advise you about both reasonable adjustments and Access to Work as ways to support the disabled staff you line manage.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

WHAT IS A REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT?

Reasonable adjustments are required by law under the Equality Act 2010. A reasonable adjustment is any change in the workplace which ensures that disabled staff, or staff with learning difficulties/ disabilities (LDD), are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their job.

These changes can be made to the physical environment, the employee's working conditions or hours, to the organisation's policies, or provide any additional equipment or support needed.

HOW MUCH DO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS COST?

Many reasonable adjustments are free, such as magnification software, or inexpensive.

Reasonable adjustments, such as specialist software, cost more but are worth it for the increase in productivity.

MYTH

Employers must pay for all adjustments to the workplace

FACT

Employers can seek financial support for the majority of adjustments through Access to Work.



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ACCESS TO WORK

Access to Work is a free government scheme which reimburses the costs of equipment, adaptations or support worker services to support disabled members of staff and those with LDD to take up or stay in work.

DID YOU KNOW?

Access to Work can fund up to the value of £59,200 per staff member.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT ACCESS TO WORK COULD REIMBURSE INCLUDE:

- magnification software
- a hearing aid-compatible telephone
- a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter
- travel to and from work if this would otherwise be a barrier to employment.

Apprentices can also apply to Access to Work. Just like other staff, this must be done by the individual themselves.

You can support them to do this by discussing what they would find useful, and if any reasonable adjustments could be made to support them, such as changing their working pattern, before they apply for any adaptations through Access to Work.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT AND ACCESS TO WORK?

Access to Work is a government grant scheme which reimburses individuals for adjustments which are more specialised or may not have been reasonable in the circumstances and cost up to a set value per year.

Access to Work cannot pay for reasonable adjustments which should have been provided by the employer.





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EXAMPLE OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The reasonable adjustments listed below are examples of ways to make changes for disabled staff/staff with LDD. This is not a complete list and we would always recommend having an ongoing discussion about what would be useful for each individual, as people with similar conditions or disabilities may need different adjustments. Some of these may be provided by individual organisations, or through Access to Work.

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- Providing a telephone compatible with a hearing aid – a sound amplifier is included so that people with hearing impairments can use it.
- Re-allocating telephone tasks to a colleague – it may be more appropriate to re-allocate any telephone tasks to colleagues.
- Holding meetings in quiet spaces – ensuring that there is minimal background noise can support someone with a hearing impairment to fully participate in a meeting.
- Accommodating a sign language interpreter, by including an extra chair in meetings.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

- Providing information in a variety of formats - for example in large text or audio - may be a useful way for someone with a visual impairment to receive information.

For electronic documents, ensuring that it can be read by a text-to-speech reader can help someone with a visual impairment to access information.

WHEELCHAIR USER/MOBILITY

- Providing a height adjustable desk allows employees to make the desk right for them and their wheelchair.
- Relocating someone’s workstation to the ground floor – for some people it is not possible to access other floors, so this can help them to access the workplace.
- Widening doorways or rearranging office furniture for better access – in some buildings it is possible to widen doorways to allow access for a wheelchair user or moving office furniture such as desks.
- Allocating a designated car space near the building.
- Re-allocating tasks to colleagues, such as a task which requires travelling over uneven ground.





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ANXIETY

- Providing a fixed desk- for some people having their own desk will help them to be less anxious than if they were hot desking.
- Altered or flexible working hours can be helpful if an employee finds commuting during peak hour stressful.

CHRONIC OR EPISODIC CONDITIONS, FOR EXAMPLE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS OR CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

- Modifying sickness absence processes to discount disability-related absence.
- Allowing employees to work from home during flare ups or more difficult days.

SENSORY PROCESSING CONDITIONS, INCLUDING AUTISM

- Providing a quiet, dimly lit space for employees to take a break in or work in can prevent sensory overload.
- Allowing employees to work while wearing noise-cancelling headphones, or using other sensory aids, can prevent sensory overload.
- Providing the flexibility for the employee to work from home so they can control their environment.

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES

- Providing information in an easy read format – easy read uses simple language, pictures and short sentences so that people with learning difficulties and disabilities can access the information they need.
- Allowing more time to explain tasks or to give feedback can support employees with a learning difficulty or disability to successfully complete tasks.



SHARED LEARNING

VIDEO CASE STUDY – NAOMI MILLER

This video features occupational therapist, Naomi Miller, who has severe dyslexia. Filmed at East London Foundation Trust, we find out how adjustments to Naomi's shift pattern and ways of working support her to deliver excellent patient care.





ONGOING SUPPORT

Once the correct support had been established for an individual, continue to have open conversations around the support they may require as their needs change. This way, when any requirements arise, the individual will feel comfortable to discuss them with you.

Using the workplace passport can be a good way to frame discussions about any changes an individual requires as their needs fluctuate.

STAFF NETWORK

Does your organisation have a disabled staff network?

An additional support for disabled staff is to explore establishing a staff network. They can be a useful vehicle to ensuring that staff voices are heard on organisation-wide issues. If there is good attendance, they can also provide an opportunity for peer support to staff with specific characteristics.

Engage with disabled staff around their experiences

The best way to support disabled staff across your organisation is to keep talking. Ensuring the lines of conversation are open on both sides means that you can engage in a meaningful way and understand their experiences of working in your organisation. If your staff members report negative experiences, you then have an early opportunity to address these quickly and efficiently.



SHARED LEARNING

VIDEO CASE STUDY – EMMA WOOD

We have two videos of deputy CEO and director of people, Emma Wood, filmed at Gloucester Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.



In the first video from Emma, she talks about why it's vital to have ongoing conversations with disabled staff to ensure they feel valued at work.



In the second video, Emma shares her personal story and explains how the support of her manager, chief executive Deborah Lee, has enabled her to excel in her role.



CONCLUSION

Now you have worked your way through the toolkit, you will have a better understanding of the ways in which you can recruit disabled people into your organisation and how you can best support them once in post.

You can continue to dip in and dip out of the toolkit in your journey to becoming an inclusive employer.

The last few pages contain an extensive resource section to refer to for further support, and you can find out the latest developments on the [NHS Employers website](#).





RESOURCES

GENERAL RESOURCES

Remploy

Remploy provides advice and guidance to help you support disabled staff in employment. www.remploy.co.uk

Scope

Scope advocates and campaign for disabled people's rights and provide guidance on best practice. www.scope.org.uk

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK provides guidance and advocacy about current and future rights of disabled people. This includes legal compliance, workplace best practice and training. www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Mencap

Mencap provides advice and guidance about learning disabilities, including employment best practice. www.mencap.org.uk

End the Awkward campaign

End the Awkward campaign by Scope aims to help people feel less awkward about disability by addressing misconceptions and providing advice about talking to disabled people about their disability. www.scope.org.uk

Evenbreak

Evenbreak is a job website which links disabled candidates with inclusive employers. It offers advice and guidance to employers about accessible recruitment. www.evenbreak.co.uk

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

Easy read information

Gov.uk: Easy read information helps people with learning disabilities to access information. www.gov.uk

Screen readers

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB): Screen readers help those with visual impairments to access information. Some visually impaired people also use Braille. www.rnib.org.uk

Braille

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB): Braille is a method of communication for blind and partially-sighted people using raised dots. www.rnib.org.uk

British Sign Language (BSL)

British Deaf Association: BSL is the preferred language of 87,000+ people in the UK, with a total of 151,000 BSL users across the UK. www.bda.org.uk

UK Council on Deafness:

Video relay services help BSL users to communicate independently with businesses and services. www.deafcouncil.org.uk



RECRUITING ACCESSIBLY

Recruiting from your community

NHS Employers: Here you will find information on how to attract, recruit and retain disabled staff.

- Supporting disabled apprentices
- Recruiting from your local community
- Taking positive action

Easy read job applications

NHS Employers: Here you can find template easy-read job applications to use in accessible recruitment. www.nhsemployers.org

Work trial

Into Work Factsheet – Learning Disability: A work trial allows an organisation to assess the skills of an applicant in a realistic environment. This PDF also includes suggestions of other adjustments. www.intowork.org.uk

Inclusive job adverts

Evenbreak: Inclusive job adverts are clear about what the job requires, affirms the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities, and makes use of accessibility tools such as captions and alt text. www.evenbreak.co.uk

ADJUSTMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

Access to Work

Access to Work is a government scheme which supports workplace adjustments for disabled staff so they can fulfill their role. Access to Work also provides disability awareness training. www.gov.uk

Reasonable workplace adjustments

Gov.uk: Reasonable adjustments ensure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions aren't substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. www.gov.uk

Job carving/job redesign

Clear Kit: Job carving is the redistribution of duties within an organisation, team, or job role to better suit a candidate and to improve workforce supply, whilst addressing the business need. www.clearkit.co.uk

STANDARDS

Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)

NHS England: The WDES helps NHS organisations to compare experiences of non-disabled and disabled staff. The WDES is now mandated via the NHS Standard Contract for 2017-19. www.england.nhs.uk www.nhsemployers.org

Making the Difference: Diversity and Inclusion in the NHS

"*Making the Difference: Diversity and Inclusion in the NHS*" report by Michael West, Jeremy Dawson, Mandip Kaur was published in 2015 and was the basis for the WRES. It explores the discrimination faced by various groups across the NHS. Findings about disability discrimination are on page 9, and overall recommendations are on pages 12-15. www.kingsfund.org.uk

Disability Confident scheme

NHS Employers: Disability Confident is a government scheme which supports organisations to recruit and retain disabled staff and to demonstrate a commitment to employing and supporting disabled staff. www.nhsemployers.org