



mildon

DISABILITY INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

MAKING YOUR ORGANISATION MORE ACCESSIBLE
AND DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE



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Introduction

To become a disability inclusive employer there are a range of improvements that organisations should make to go from good to great.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of how an organisation can accelerate the attraction, recruitment and retention of disabled people to become an employer of choice in their industry.

To achieve this aim, the content is focused on improvements that can be made across different stages of the employee life-cycle. The employee journey is broken down into the areas of talent attraction, recruitment and onboarding, retention and development, line manager confidence, and workplace adjustments.

About the author of this report



PROFESSIONAL AND LIVED
EXPERIENCE OF DISABILITY

AUTHOR OF THE BOOK
“INCLUSIVE GROWTH”

FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE OF
DISABILITY PREJUDICE AND
INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Toby Mildon is a Diversity and Inclusion Architect and founder of Mildon, a consultancy and advisory business. Toby has both professional and lived experience of disability. Toby works with businesses to devise diversity and inclusion strategies, re-engineer processes and systems to minimise the impact of bias and build a culture of inclusion. Toby is the author of the Amazon bestselling book [Inclusive Growth](#). Prior to setting up his business, Toby worked as an in-house diversity and inclusion manager at the BBC and Deloitte. Toby also chaired BBC Ability (the disabled staff employee resource group), which represented the voices and careers of disabled staff and those living with long-term health conditions within the corporation. Toby has lived experience of disability having been born with a rare neuromuscular disability (Spinal Muscular Atrophy) and is a powered wheelchair user and requires 24-hour care. Toby has first-hand experience of disability prejudice as well as great examples of inclusive leadership having worked in businesses like British Airways, Accenture, Lloyds Bank, Cerner, the BBC and Deloitte.

Start With Your Why

It is said by Simon Sinek, the well-known management expert (and author of “Start With Why”) that **people do not buy what you do, they buy why you do it**. In other words, people do not buy into what you do, they buy into why you do it. In light of this, it is important for an organisation to agree why disability inclusion is important to their business. Reasons cited might include:

- It is morally **the right thing to do** - as an employer we want to improve equality within our society and local communities
- An inclusive culture **helps us attract the best talent**
- We can **retain the best people** and reduce cost of employee attrition
- Diversity of thoughts and lived experiences enable us to **be more creative and innovative**
- We want to **reflect our diverse customers** and anticipate their needs

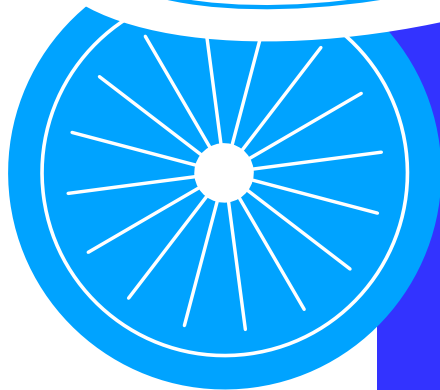
Employing disabled people and fostering an inclusive culture is paramount. Firstly, it harnesses the diverse range of skills, perspectives, and talents that disabled workers bring to the table, enhancing innovation and productivity. **By actively including disabled individuals in the workforce, employers play a vital role in breaking down societal barriers and prejudices that have historically excluded us from equal work opportunities.**

Inclusivity in the workplace also directly combats economic inequalities, as gainful employment empowers disabled individuals to be financially independent and reduce their likelihood of living in poverty. In a landscape where government interventions might be inconsistent or insufficient, **employers hold significant power in shaping societal perceptions and driving genuine change.** Through their proactive efforts, employers can set new industry standards, advocate for disability rights, and create ripple effects that benefit not just disabled workers but society at large.

The origins of the typewriter, a precursor to the modern keyboard, have an intriguing connection to a blind countess in Italy. The story goes that Pellegrino Turri, an Italian inventor, developed an early version of the typewriter for his friend, Countess Carolina Fantoni da Fivizzano, in the early 19th century. The countess was blind, and Turri wanted to provide her with a means to write letters without assistance. Along with the typewriter, Turri also invented carbon paper to provide ink for the machine, enabling the countess to produce written documents. While Turri's invention was not the first attempt at creating a machine to assist with writing, his story is a notable early example of assistive technology specifically designed to aid someone with a disability.



Disability Confident status



The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Disability Confident scheme encourages organisations to actively strive to become a recognised Disability Confident employer.

Organisations will greatly benefit from following the framework, guidance and best practice of the Disability Confident scheme.

The different levels that can be achieved in the scheme support both work that is underway and further continuous improvement which provides greater value to your disabled employees and candidates.

The remainder of this report will share recommendations for attracting, recruiting and onboarding disabled people, establishing confidence in line managers, and assessing your approach to workplace adjustments. I have included a summary of my recommendations at the end of this report.

A note about language

When discussing disability, many individuals grapple with using the appropriate terminology, fearful of unintentionally causing offence. Such hesitations can result in avoidance of the topic altogether, missing out on valuable discussions and individuals left feeling unseen and unheard. This apprehension is not confined to disability alone; similar anxieties arise when addressing other diversity dimensions, including race, LGBTQ+ identities, and gender identity.

It's pivotal to note **that language preferences around disability are unique and personal.** For instance, the author identifies as a “gay disabled man” (thereby introducing the intersectionality of disability and sexuality). The Social Model of disability emphasises the societal barriers, whether physical (e.g., inaccessible buildings), procedural or attitudinal, that “disable” individuals, rather than viewing disability as an intrinsic attribute. The model thus promotes the term “disabled people” over “people with a disability”.

Recognising and respecting individual language preferences is essential when conversing with a disabled person. Despite the intricacies, fostering “brave spaces” for these essential dialogues is crucial. And, should misunderstandings arise, it's vital to **learn and move forward without defensiveness.**



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
Talent Attraction

Optimising your careers messaging



SUGGESTED WORDING

For your careers site

To attract disabled and diverse talent into an organisation consider taking the following actions:

1. Include an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) statement on your careers site.

For example, the BBC include the following in their job adverts:

- *We don't focus simply on what we do – we also care how we do it. Our values and the way we behave are important to us.*
- *Diversity matters at the BBC. We have a working environment where we value and respect every individual's unique contribution, enabling all of our employees to thrive and achieve their full potential.*
- *We want to attract the broadest range of talented people to be part of the BBC – whether that's to contribute to our programming or our wide range of non-production roles. The more diverse our workforce, the better able we are to respond to and reflect our audiences in all their diversity.*
- *We are committed to equality of opportunity and welcome applications from individuals, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic background, religion and/or belief.*
- *We will consider flexible working requests for all roles, unless operational requirements prevent otherwise.*

2. Guarantee all candidates with a disability an interview where they meet the minimum requirements of the role.

3. Optimise all job adverts using tools like [Textio](#) or [Develop Diverse](#).



USEFUL TOOLS

For inclusive writing



From job posts to performance reviews, Textio removes the bias with powerful DEIB data insights and metrics.

DEVELOP

DIVERSE™

Develop Diverse is a tool to increase your team diversity through inclusive communication.

4. If the organisation is a member of the [Disability Confident](#) scheme **display it prominently on the website and in your candidate comms**



Disability Confident is a government initiative designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions.

Run Talent Attraction Campaigns

To attract talent, **run campaigns which present stories about disabled employees**, both visible and invisible, as well as those living with long-term health conditions.

If the organisation uses specialist job boards, monitor their success and Return on Investment (ROI) in attracting disabled talent. If these boards do not yield the desired number of candidates consider re-allocating the budget to creating or optimising your existing talent attraction campaign for nondisabled talent. This might include creating videos that can be used on social media and online to discuss the organisation’s inclusion of disabled people.



[Purple Goat](#) can help develop campaigns on social media by helping brands connect with disabled audiences.

Furthermore, consider including some of the following in a campaign:



TO DO LIST

- **Organising open days** so that potential candidates can meet staff and see the work environment for themselves. This helps candidates see arrangements for accessibility and address any misconceptions they may hold.
- **Developing relationships with local Disabled People’s Organisations (DPO)** which can connect employers with disabled talent locally and encourage their members to apply.
- **Tapping into any existing employee networks** and leveraging the connections within them.

Finding entry-level talent with disabilities

Creating ring-fenced work experience and job trials for disabled people could help attract talent to an organisation's entry-level roles, including apprenticeships. **Consider partnering with organisations who manage internships schemes** such as Leonard Cheshire's [Change 100 internship scheme](#) and [10,000 Able Interns](#).

Create inclusive and informative careers site pages

A careers or jobs home page should include images of disabled employees in an authentic way. Since, not all disabilities are visible, include stories and images about staff with invisible conditions and long-term health conditions.

Be explicit about the adjustments offered to disabled candidates during the recruitment process. Consider adding separate pages which can highlight these, other EDI commitments and FAQs that disabled candidates might ask.



SUGGESTED WORDING
For your careers site

EDI PAGE

We are committed to recruiting and retaining disabled people to help address the disability employment gap.

CAREERS HOME PAGE

We are committed to employing, retaining, and developing disabled people. We offer all disabled candidates an interview where they have the skills and experience we're looking for and will make adjustments in the recruitment process for you if needed. If we offer you a job, we will discuss with you any adjustments you need to help you perform at your best in your new role.

JOB ADVERT FOOTER

Talented people come from different backgrounds and with different lived experiences and the workforce needs to reflect the diverse communities we serve.

We're committed to being an inclusive organisation that celebrates difference, removes barriers, and supports people to be their very best in their jobs. Together we make this organisation a great place to work.

If you are disabled and want to clarify aspects of the role, our approach to recruitment, or discuss any adjustments you need to help you be at your best during the recruitment process, please email [email address] or phone [phone number].



Check web pages for accessibility issues

Accessibility issues can include things like:

- Contrast errors in text and background colours affecting legibility
- Broken links
- Missing alt text
- Problems with structural elements



USEFUL TOOL
For accessibility audit

It is recommended to **conduct an accessibility audit of any career or job pages, or the whole website**. Hassell Inclusion, and especially their [Live Auditing solution](#), is the best choice for conducting an accessibility audit. An accessibility audit provides a snapshot in time of any issues and needs an action plan to fix any problems found.

Create an Accessibility Statement that informs users of any current accessibility issues and what is being done to address them (or why they cannot be addressed). Users should be informed what they should do if they are unable to complete an action online such as apply for a job. Without regular maintenance it is very easy for websites to become broken again as they are updated. Therefore, it is essential to provide ongoing training for your content authors, developers and designers, project and product managers. Hassell Inclusion are recommended providers for this training.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

Recruitment and Onboarding

Remove friction – make jobs easy to apply for



SUGGESTED WORDING

For application forms



SUGGESTED WORDING

For confirmation messages

Ensure the application process is straightforward with no online accessibility concerns such as those mentioned above.

Further considerations include:

- User friendly language should be consistent with brand tone and style.
- Explicitly state that adjustments can be made for candidates during the recruitment process and direct them to additional information if needed.
- In the application form, candidates should be able to specify any adjustments they would like considered during the recruitment process. For example, add a question with a free text field that asks, **“What can we do to help you thrive in this interview?”** This question is helpful for disabled candidates but for other candidates with particular circumstances like parental/caring responsibilities, mental health concerns, introverts/extroverts or people with religious observances.
- When a candidate submits their application provide a confirmation message which could say:
We have now received your completed job application. Our managers aim to review all applications within 2 weeks, but sometimes this may be longer. We’ll update you as soon as possible on the next steps or will let you know if we won’t be progressing with your application further at this time. Contact [insert relevant email] if you have any concerns about your application or wish to discuss any adjustments we can make for you due to a disability or long-term health condition.

Train managers

Invest in training and support for hiring managers to boost confidence and awareness of our implicit biases and blindspots. This is especially important if line managers are responsible for and play a pivotal role in facilitating reasonable adjustments during the

recruitment process. Since this creates an increased risk of inconsistency and discrimination claims, Human Resources should coordinate and track all adjustments requested by job applicants centrally to create an audit trail.

Consider alternative methods of candidate assessment

Encourage managers to use **objective assessment methods**, such as giving candidates a technical challenge at the beginning of the recruitment process.

In addition, candidates could be provided with interview questions before the interview in order to minimise anxiety, help them prepare well and shine at the interview. Instead of giving candidates the actual interview questions, you can provide them with a set of sample interview questions so that they can still demonstrate how they can “think on their feet”.

Onboarding considerations: avoid use of health screening questionnaires

Questions about workplace adjustments should be included as part of an onboarding process, however they should not form part of a “health screening” questionnaire. **Workplace adjustments do not need to be directly linked to health** as this encourages the medical model of disability rather than promoting a social model of disability.

The medical model of disability primarily views disability as a health issue inherent to an individual, focusing on treatments or “fixes.” This perspective often sidelines the societal barriers and negative attitudes faced by disabled individuals, inadvertently perpetuating stereotypes of dependency and framing disability as a problem to be cured. Many disability advocates favour the social model, which emphasises that societal structures and perceptions, rather than the individuals themselves, create the disabling barriers. **The social model promotes a rights-based approach, aiming for societal change over individual alteration.**

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

According to Scope, the social model of disability “says that **people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference.** Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people’s attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can’t do certain things. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control.”



TO DO LIST

Things to consider during successful onboarding:

- Include **workplace adjustments** in any onboarding checklist for managers.
- New hires could receive a **Workplace Adjustments flyer** as part of their onboarding paperwork so that they know what is available and to give them confidence to request adjustments.
- Consider creating an **Adjustments Passport** in new joiner packs that a candidate can discuss with their new manager.



A Workplace Adjustments Passport is a personalised, written record used by employees with disabilities to document and communicate their specific work-related needs and adjustments. This tool **ensures that the individual's work environment and tasks are adapted to accommodate their unique requirements, promoting inclusion and equality in the workplace.** It serves as a point of reference for both the employee and manager, facilitating transparent discussions and eliminating the repetitive need for employees to explain their circumstances, especially when transitioning to new roles or when there's a change in management. The passport helps in fostering understanding, consistency, and support throughout an individual's career journey.



USEFUL TOOL
For onboarding

- Consider using a tool like [Enboarder](#) to facilitate the onboarding experience and relationship between new joiners and line manager and team (and be sure to include disability inclusion/workplace adjustments content and details of your disability employee resource group if you have one).



Enboarder is a tool to increase retention, alignment, and engagement at every stage of the employee lifecycle



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

**Retention,
Development and
Manager Confidence**

Developing managers into confident leaders



AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT For Managers

It is said that **people don't leave organisations, people leave their managers, so investing in managers who are capable of leading disabled staff is a worthwhile investment.**

In particular, many organisations find that development is required in areas such as:

- Communicating openly and confidently and not shying away from difficult or awkward topics
- Overcoming the fear of offending or embarrassing others
- Understanding that disabled staff are experts in their own conditions, impairments or disabilities and should be “coached” in improving their confidence at work in order to facilitate personal and career development.
- Actions should be taken following discussions with colleagues as inaction can be damaging. Managers should know what is possible and what resources are available.
- Having regular conversations and “checking in” with team members is crucial. Managers should have quality conversations even if they're under time pressure.
- Focus on understanding the impact of a colleague's situation and how they can help alleviate it, not the underlying causes.
- In situations where managers feel out of their depth when interacting with disabled colleagues, HR can provide additional support (who themselves may need support from an external disability specialist).



TO DO LIST For Managers

In particular, managers need to be encouraged to have a bias towards action and:

- Understand the importance of inclusion and accessibility among disabled employees in these conversations.
- Have difficult conversations instead of putting them off.

- Ensure that the actions agreed upon in their conversations are taken.
- Clarifying when action will be taken and setting clear expectations.
- Implement adjustments quickly and within agreed timescales.
- Quickly escalating concerns up the management chain if adjustments are not implemented in time.



USEFUL TOOL

For developing managers



Developing other managers will be easier by sharing stories, advice, and tips from managers who show empathy, accountability, and action. Consider joining the Confident Conversations programme with [Purple Space](#), which can help address some of these issues.

the Confident Conversations programme with [Purple Space](#), which can help address some of these issues.

Make learning and development pathways accessible

To make learning events accessible, consider running them as hybrid events or alternate between in person and online events.

In regular career conversations discuss whether workplace adjustments should be implemented (not just for disabled staff) and whether any barriers to implementation can be identified. My favourite question that managers should ask is: ***what speed humps and roadblocks are getting in your way in your career progression?*** This is a great way to identify barriers.

An organisation should be aware of what career progression for disabled employees who have adjustments in place looks like. For example, it may be difficult for someone to advance or grow in their careers, since progression could upset established healthcare or social care support systems. It might be harder for a disabled employee to simply move to the other side of the country for a promotion. Therefore, it is important to pay particular attention to how these team members can be supported. This awareness and action could contribute towards closing any disability pay gaps in the organisation which remains a significant issue nationally.



STATISTICS

About disability pay gap

The statistics for the national picture are as follows:

- The pay gap for disabled people has increased to the point that **disabled people effectively work for free for the last 54 days of the year** and stop being paid on 7 November.
- New analysis published by the TUC shows that **non-disabled workers now earn a sixth (17.2%) more than disabled workers**, with the pay gap for disabled workers standing at £2.05 an hour – or £3,731 per year for someone working a 35-hour week.
- The union’s analysis revealed that **disabled women faced the biggest pay gap**, with non-disabled men paid on average 35% (£3.93 an hour, or £7,144 a year) more than disabled women.
- The research also shows that **the disability pay gap persists for workers throughout their careers**. It starts at age 20 at 65p an hour and increases steadily with age to a peak of £3.55 an hour, or £6,461 a year, for disabled workers aged 40 to 44.

“Declaring” or “disclosing” disabilities



MUST READS

It is common for diversity and inclusion surveys to ask whether respondents consider themselves to have a disability or long-term health condition (with the option to answer *yes*, *no*, or *prefer not to say*).

It is helpful to change the language, moving away from “declaration” and “disclosure”, both of which can discourage people from sharing their disability information. In her report [Secrets and Big News](#), Kate Nash provides further recommendations on this topic.

A further problem with this approach is that not everyone identifies as disabled (even if they are technically covered under the Equality Act 2010). **People can be afraid the disclosure of a disability may affect their career prospects** or have developed coping strategies to manage their condition well, so it doesn’t really present a major issue for them at work.

The [Washington Group](#)'s set of questions take a functional approach, which means we **ask about difficulties performing basic activities in universal domains of functioning rather than health conditions, impairments, or diseases**. A continuum of difficulties (from *none* to *some*, *a lot*, and *cannot do at all*) is revealed by these data. There are six domains: **seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care**, and **communication**. As a result of barriers encountered in the physical and social environments, those with greater difficulty are more likely to be at risk for limited participation.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

For EDI surveys

The questions are:

- ***Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?***
- ***Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?***
- ***Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?***
- ***Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?***
- ***Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?***
- ***Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?***
- ***Do you have difficulty raising a 2-litre bottle of water or soda from waist to eye level?***
- ***Do you have difficulty using your hands and fingers, such as picking up small objects, for example, a button or pencil, or opening or closing containers or bottles?***

Each of the above questions then provide a scale (from *none* to *some*, *a lot*, and *cannot do at all*) and remember to include a *prefer not to say* option.

By using the Washington Group's questions, organisations can identify the number of employees who may face barriers.

A common concern is that the above list does not clearly include neurodivergent conditions (like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia et cetera).

Therefore, you may want to include an additional question like:



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

For EDI surveys

- ***Do you consider yourself to be neuro-divergent (for example, living with autism, dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Tourette Syndrome, etc.) and/or live with a learning disability?***

With the option of saying *yes, maybe, no or prefer not to say*.

The above questions do not cover mental health so you may want to include questions about whether or not employees have experienced depression and anxiety (in particular) and the levels of feeling when they last experienced this. For example:

- ***How often do you feel worried, nervous or anxious?***
According to Mind, anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.
- ***How often do you feel depressed?***
According to Mind, depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time, and affects your everyday life. In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn't stop you leading your normal life but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make you feel suicidal.

And then ask

- ***Thinking about the last time you felt worried, nervous or anxious, how would you describe the level of these feelings?*** and ***Thinking about the last time you felt depressed, how depressed did you feel?***

If you do ask questions about mental health and well-being it's good practice to share well-being resources like details of your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), intranet pages and details of well-being and mental health organisations in the survey.

Employees often have concerns about sharing disability data in HR Management Information Systems, which you should address whenever requesting data. The most common concerns are:

- **Fear of Discrimination and Judgement:** They are concerned about how disclosing disability might affect their work, their relationships with managers and colleagues, and even their job security.
- **Confidentiality Concerns:** Some people are not comfortable sharing their disability status because they are unsure who will see this data and how it will be used. They need more transparency and reassurances about the confidentiality of their data.
- **Perception of Invisible Disabilities:** There's a perception among some people that invisible disabilities (for example, mental health conditions) may not be seen as "real" disabilities, or they don't feel their condition is "bad enough" to disclose. This suggests a need for greater awareness about invisible conditions as a legitimate aspect of disability.
- **Desire for Privacy:** Some people simply feel that their disability status is personal information that they do not wish to share at work. They may be more comfortable managing their condition privately or in ways that they can control.

Regularly seek feedback from disabled employees

- **Lack of Awareness or Guidance:** Some people seem to be unaware that they could update their employee data after a diagnosis, or they didn't understand that their condition qualifies as a disability.

In the 90s, the disability rights movement coined the phrase **"nothing about us without us", which should be a foundation for engaging disabled employees.**

Regular engagement can be done in a range of ways which may include:

- Collaborating with the disability employee resource group or network.
- Adding a "What stops you from being your best?" question to the employee engagement survey.
- Survey managers about the challenges they face when managing disabled staff and individuals with long-term health conditions.

Ensure that engagement and consultation processes involving disabled staff are accessible, consistent and formalised and not just done ad hoc.

We previously shared questions to gauge disability demographic data, however, it doesn't capture qualitative inclusivity data for you.

Therefore, useful questions you could ask in a survey or interviews with disabled staff are:



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS For employee feedback

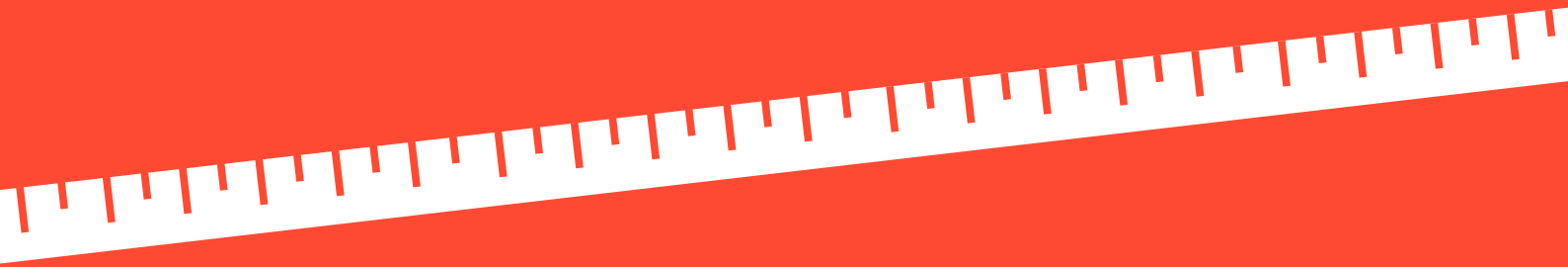
- ***How respected or disrespected do you feel at work on an average day?***
- ***How empowered or disempowered do you feel during a typical workday?***
- ***When you think about a typical day at work, how much belonging do you feel?***
- ***When you imagine a typical day at work, do you think you will be able to advance your career at this organisation?***

- *What is this organisation doing well when it comes to including disabled colleagues? How can this organisation become more accessible and inclusive for colleagues with disabilities or long-term health conditions?*
- *What do you think prevents this organisation from attracting and recruiting more disabled people? Is there anything this organisation should do to attract and recruit more people with disabilities or to make the recruitment process more accessible?*
- *In your opinion, what hinders disabled employees from progressing and staying with the organisation? What should this organisation do to promote and retain disabled employees?*

Exit surveys should include disability reasons

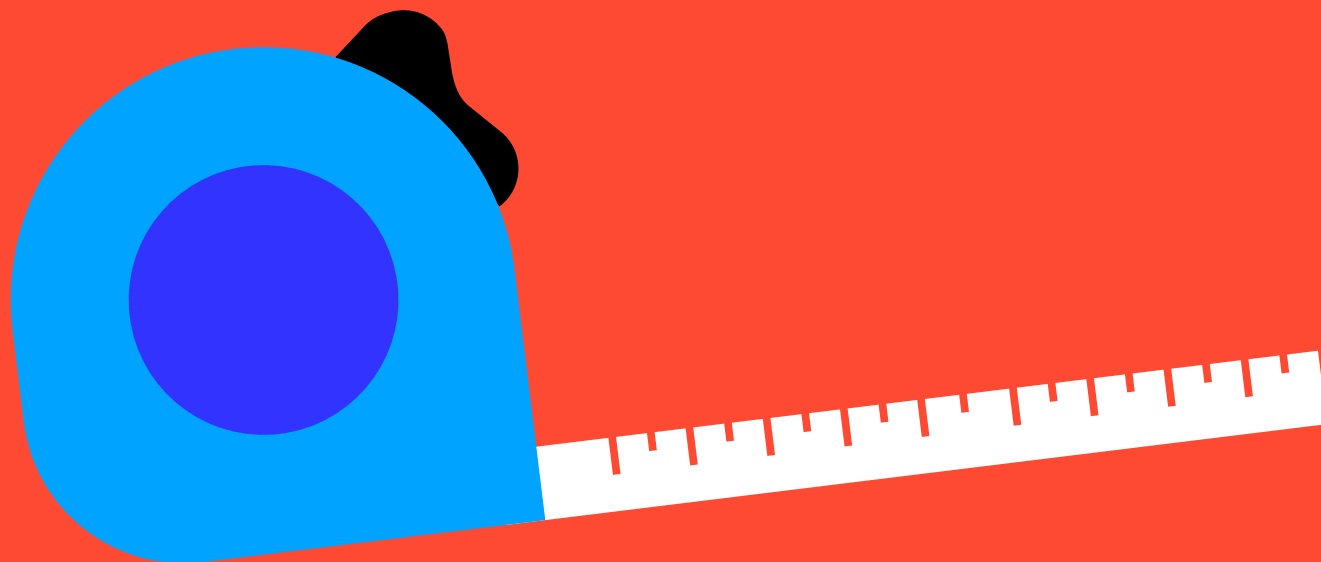
In exit surveys or interviews you should include diversity demographic information (including disability and long-term health conditions) towards the end of the interview or survey. Ensure additional context is provided for collecting diversity demographic data and share how this information will be used e.g. to improve employee experience.

Consider including the question: ***“Are you leaving the company because you do not feel respected or that you belong?”***. This is a closed question with the following response options: *yes, no, perhaps, or prefer not to say* which will provide quantitative data.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

Workplace Adjustments



A reminder of our duties



CHECK LIST

Under the UK's Equality Act 2010, **employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled employees or job applicants are not substantially disadvantaged** when compared to non-disabled individuals. Here's a breakdown of these duties:

- **Provisions, Criteria, or Practices**
If an employer has provisions, criteria, or practices (PCPs) that put a disabled person at a disadvantage compared to others, they must take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage. This could include changing the way things are done, like altering a policy or procedure.
- **Physical Features**
The duty also applies to overcoming disadvantages resulting from physical features of the employer's premises. This might include removing or altering those physical features, or providing a reasonable means of avoiding them. Examples include adding ramps, widening doorways, or relocating workstations.
- **Auxiliary Aids**
Employers must provide an auxiliary aid if, without one, a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. This can encompass tangible items like special equipment or software, or services like sign language interpreters.
- **Consultation**
When determining what adjustments to make, it's good practice for employers to consult with the disabled individual to understand their needs and preferences.
- **Anticipatory Nature**
This duty is "anticipatory", meaning employers should consider potential barriers for disabled people and address them before any specific issue arises.
- **Cost**
Generally, the employer pays for any reasonable adjustments. What's "reasonable" depends on various factors, such as the adjustment's effectiveness, its cost,

the employer's size and resources, and the potential disruption it might cause.

- **Confidentiality**
Employers must maintain confidentiality regarding any information about an employee's disability and the adjustments made.
- **No Adverse Treatment**
A disabled employee should not be treated adversely because they have requested or require reasonable adjustments.
- **Adjustment Passport**
Some organisations use tools like the Workplace Adjustments Passport (as discussed previously in this report) to keep a record of agreed adjustments. While not a requirement under the Equality Act, it can be a practical way of documenting and regularly reviewing adjustments.

It's crucial for employers to be familiar with their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure compliance and foster a supportive, inclusive work environment. Take a positive and proactive attitude towards workplace adjustments.

Consider including the following:



TO DO LIST

- Make sure employees have everything they need from day one. This means being proactive at the job offer stage and being organised during the onboarding process.
- The organisational culture gives a sense of confidence and comfort for staff to express their needs and request adjustments. In other words you are creating psychological safety based on a foundation of trust.
- The organisation has a slick and easy process for putting adjustments in place.
- Employees feel that they will be taken care of from the very beginning and will feel a sense of belonging working for the company.

Establish or maintain a centralised adjustments budget

Often, organisations do not have a centralised budget for workplace adjustments. This can work against implementing the recommendations set out above.

Making workplace adjustments can sometimes benefit the whole workforce (disabled and non-disabled staff alike) and can be an investment in many people and not just one individual.

For example, consider a scenario in which one colleague has broken their wrist and highlights difficulty opening the lids of the tea and coffee jars in your kitchen. A new easy access jar is identified and its use is rolled out across the organisation. This benefits not only the individual, but other employees who may be experiencing manual dexterity challenges for different reasons (for example, arthritis with ageing) and did not have the confidence to speak out.

Concerns about the cost of employing disabled people

According to research by Disability Rights UK, a good number of employers have concerns about the cost of employing disabled people, for example, the cost of making workplace adjustments

[According to the CEO of DRUK:](#)



Employers fear that disabled people will be an expensive burden – they see the disability rather than the ability. For employees, the fear is that companies won't hire them or they hide their disability and worry about being found out.

There's a lot of data that shows that employing a disabled person doesn't cost more. There are government support schemes such as the Access to Work scheme. **Disabled people tend to stay loyal to their employer longer than everybody else** and take less sick leave. But the main positive for me about employing disabled people is **the diversity of experience that they bring to a business.**

Specific costs associated with making adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 can vary widely based on the nature of the adjustment, the workplace environment, the needs of the employee, and the type of organisation. However, several general points and trends related to the cost of reasonable adjustments can be noted:

- **Typically Low Cost**
Many studies and reports indicate that the majority of workplace adjustments for disabled employees are low in cost. For instance, according to some sources, a significant proportion of workplace adjustments cost nothing or are under a certain threshold, such as £50.
- **High Return on Investment**
While there might be initial costs associated with certain adjustments, the benefits often outweigh the costs in terms of retention of experienced staff, increased employee productivity, reduced absenteeism, and decreased recruitment costs.
- **Financial Assistance**
In the UK, the Access to Work scheme (administered by the DWP) can help fund necessary workplace adjustments.
- **Varied Adjustments**
Adjustments can range from simple measures like providing ergonomic chairs or flexible work hours (which may cost very little) to more significant alterations like installing ramps or modifying toilet facilities.
- **Non-Physical Adjustments**
Many adjustments, especially those that aren't related to physical infrastructure, can be relatively inexpensive. These might include changes to work patterns, providing written materials in alternative formats, or allowing remote work.
- **Anticipatory Adjustments**
Costs can also be mitigated if employers make “anticipatory” adjustments. By proactively making

workplaces more accessible and inclusive, employers might avoid more significant expenses in the long run.

- **Benefits Beyond Cost Savings**

Beyond direct cost considerations, making workplaces inclusive can also enhance a company's reputation, broaden their customer base, and foster innovation through diverse perspectives.

It's also worth noting that while the financial aspect is essential, ensuring equality, dignity, and inclusivity for all employees is invaluable in fostering a positive workplace culture and society at large.

Normalise workplace adjustments across the organisation

Consider running an internal communications campaign that normalises workplace adjustments among managers and employees.

A campaign like this could:

- Educate people about what is available and how it is funded (i.e. if it is funded centrally, it doesn't come out of managers budgets). **Make managers aware what kinds of adjustments could be available.**
- People should be informed that workplace adjustments are available even if they do not personally see themselves as disabled, and that **they should not feel guilty about requesting** them or worried about the cost to the company.
- Help managers understand that workplace adjustments are **more about equity** (giving people what they need in order to thrive) **than equality** (treating everyone the same, which may or may not create a level playing field for people with disabilities).
- **Resolve some unhelpful myths and address outdated language**, such as someone not being "registered disabled." In the UK, the concept of being "registered disabled" was effectively abolished with the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995, which was later replaced by the Equality Act 2010.

These pieces of legislation sought to protect people with disabilities from discrimination, focusing on the barriers they face rather than any official “registration” of their disability.

- **Ensure that people feel confident in sharing information** with HR about disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- **Make accommodations more positive** by rephrasing the language of adjustments, such as “smart working” (or language that is more appropriate to your branding and culture) to demonstrate that workplace adjustments aren’t just for disabled employees, but can benefit everyone (for example, working parents and flexible working).

Centralise workplace adjustments

Standardise and have a centrally managed, tracked process for workplace adjustments requests so that they do not easily “fall through the cracks”. Without such a process in place it exposes an organisation to unnecessary financial, legal, productivity and reputational risk (if adjustments are not made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010). In addition, employees without a clear process or a single point of contact may find this confusing.

When workplace adjustments are centrally managed and tracked they should include:



TO DO LIST

- **An electronic system where all requests are managed and logged**, and where colleagues fulfilling them can communicate and collaborate (such as Human Resources, Facilities, IT, Occupational Health).
- **Formally defined ownership of the end-to-end process** for continual improvement, issue escalation, etc.
- **Allocating a case manager to oversee individual cases** flowing through the process thus removing the onus on managers or individuals to manage requests, and to ensure quality of service and timeliness.

- **Establishing Service Level Agreements** and reporting against them, along with the ability to escalate if deadlines are not met.
- **Keeping track of expenditures associated with workplace adjustments** and calculating average cost per employee.
- **An asset tracker** can ensure that workplace adjustments can be maintained or transferred to another employee for greater efficiency and sustainability.
- **Monitor the use of the UK Government's Access To Work scheme** (to recoup budget) and whether the organisation is benefitting from the scheme as much as it could (and to centrally manage reclaim where eligible).
- **Review workplace adjustments regularly** to make sure they remain effective for the individual.

Streamlining workplace adjustments

In most organisations requests for simple and off-the-shelf workplace adjustments can be completed relatively quickly. However, more bespoke and specialist requests can take longer.

To avoid creating unnecessary lengthy delays in the process, which affects employee productivity and engagement, consider the following good practices:



TO DO LIST

- **Use managers' existing workflows** to remind them to do so, for example, by including a reminder to fill out a workplace adjustment request on an onboarding checklist. Consider moving the responsibility for making requests from managers to the individual. A manager's role then becomes discussing the situation and guiding the individual to the right solution. From that point onwards, the individual can take responsibility with the support of their manager. The result will be a sense of empowerment for individuals and a reduction in management's workload.

- Where external assessors are involved (for example, an outsourced occupational health service provider), review the lead-in times for assessment and any equipment delivery. **Tailor any contractual Service Level Agreements (SLA) to reflect the urgency of making workplace adjustments** as quickly as possible after a request.
- **Monitor the time it takes to implement workplace adjustments overall.**

Suggested next steps

Thank you for reading this report that supports organisations to become more accessible and disability-inclusive. Now it's time to think about setting priorities for actioning this advice. Without taking this next step, the organisation will not reap the full benefit of a diverse and inclusive workplace that allows your organisation to grow, thrive and prosper.



Therefore, the team at Mildon recommends the following steps:

- **Make sure everyone interested** in making the organisation an accessible and disability-friendly organisation **receives this report.**
- Consider the recommendations within this report, convene a further discussion with your team and then **prioritise your actions.** It is recommended to use the Eisenhower priority matrix criteria for prioritisation, which are:
 - 1 - **Important and Urgent**
These actions need implementing ASAP
 - 2 - **Important but Not Urgent**
Plan who, how and when these actions will be implemented in an Action Plan
 - 3 - **Urgent but Not Important**
Discuss with your team whether these items really need implementing and if it is distracting you from more impactful actions (the important, not urgent items above)
 - 4 - **Not Urgent and Not Important**
You might not need to act on these items (but you can always put them in a “ideas log” for the future)
- **The prioritised activities should be put into an action plan** that includes:
 - 1 - The **ultimate accountable person** for the action plan. You should only have one accountable individual.
 - 2 - **Actions scheduled into short-term** (quick wins), **medium term** or **long term** horizon
 - 3 - **Breaking down each action item into manageable steps.**
 - 4 - **A responsible owner assigned to each action item.**
 - 5 - **A deadline and budget are attached to each action item.**
- Finally, **consider bringing in an external disability expert** (like the Mildon team) who can share best practices, help you avoid pitfalls and assist the organisation in accelerating its disability inclusion and accessibility journey.



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Thank you for reading this report today
and I hope you got immense value from it. If you need
any further assistance with your diversity and inclusion
journey, please contact me and my team.

Connect with us on LinkedIn



0161 883 7929

toby@mildon.co.uk

www.mildon.co.uk