INCLUSIVE COMPANIES
TOOLKIT

**DISABILITY INCLUSIVE PRACTICE
IN THE WORKPLACE**

www.inclusivecompanies.co.uk
CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION

DISABILITY INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN THE WORKPLACE TOOLKIT

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Aims of Toolkit

- An overview of the legislative framework
- Awareness of the needs of disabled employees
- An understanding of good and bad practice
- Tools to assist you in recruiting and retaining disabled staff
- Information about local and national support

What is disability inclusion at work?

Disability inclusion at work is about more than hiring people with disabilities. An inclusive workplace values all employees for their strengths. It offers employees with disabilities — whether visible or invisible — an equal opportunity to succeed, to learn, to be compensated fairly, and to advance. True inclusion is about embracing difference.

Why disability inclusion?

Disability inclusion is a critical part of any business.

It's likely that your workforce already includes many people with disabilities. Without disability inclusion, your business isn't doing all it can to support its current employees.

Disability inclusion is also crucial to your hiring process. Companies that aren't proactive about disability inclusion are losing out on qualified talent. If candidates face barriers during the application and interview process, or if they sense that your business is not inclusive, they're likely to look elsewhere.

Companies with strong disability inclusion programs have better access to talent and better employee retention. They have the tools they need to help their employees thrive.

Facts & Figures (National)

- 13.3 million disabled adults in the UK
- 5.8 million unpaid carers
- 83% of disabled people acquire their impairment during their working life
- 3 times more likely to become unemployed
- Approx. 1 million are wheelchair users
- 750,000 use British Sign Language
- 2 million use a hearing aid
- 1 in 100 of the population have a learning disability
- 1 in 4 experience mental health problems in their lifetime
- Spending Power estimated at £249 billion (Purple Pound)

Definition of Disability

If we were to ask the general public or your workforce what disability means, what do you think they would say?

Discussions around the definition of disability usually begin with those with a physical or visible difference. Frequent words and descriptions when asking people to define disability are often wheelchair user, use of crutches, having a guide dog etc. This definition can be inferred from the use of the wheelchair for blue badge parking spaces and accessible toilets. Again, the wheelchair sign is used inside workplaces and buildings to often signify accessible entrances. However, the data shows us that only 1 million people (Out of 13.3million disabled adults) in the UK are wheelchair users (With 50% being full-time wheelchair users). Its is key to raise awareness and understanding in the workplace and wider society that disability is much broader than physical impairment.

Definition: *"A Disabled person is a person who has, or who has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities"*

Reference: Disability Discrimination Act 1995 / Equality Act 2010

What 'substantial' and 'long-term' mean

- 'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed

- 'Long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection

The latest census changed the wording of the definition to say disabled or long term health condition. These changes meant a lot more people were covered by legislation who may not have realised it before.
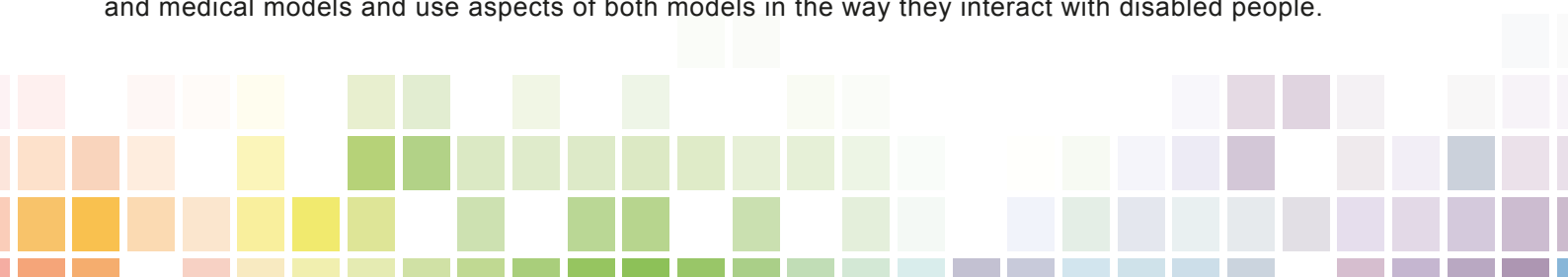
Medical and Social Model of Disability

There are two main models in terms of how disability is considered:

- The social model
- The medical model

The problem with models…

Models are a useful tool to help us think about and discuss a topic, but they can be simplistic and make things appear more clear cut than they are. In reality, most organisations sit somewhere between the social and medical models and use aspects of both models in the way they interact with disabled people.

Social Model of Disability

The social model is generally the preferred model when thinking about disability. The social model has been adopted by most disabled people's organisations. In August 2014 the social model was endorsed by the Government Equalities Office who recommended the model for use by all government departments in the way they interact with disabled people.

The social model was created by disabled people themselves and looks at the barriers erected by society in terms of disabled people being able to participate fully in day to day life. The social model seeks to remove unnecessary barriers which prevent disabled people participating in society, accessing work and living independently. This model asks what can be done to remove barriers to inclusion. It also recognises that attitudes towards disabled people create unnecessary barriers to inclusion and requires people to take proactive action to remove these barriers.

The social model identifies the problems faced by disabled people as a consequence of external factors. For example, in the way organisations produce information (not offering a variety of formats such as Braille, large text etc), or inaccessible venues. The social model distinguishes between impairment and disability. Impairment is described as a characteristic or long term trait which may or may not result from an injury or health condition which may affect a person's appearance or functioning of their mind or body. The characteristic may cause pain, fatigue, affect communications or interfere with mental capacity. The social model in no way rejects the idea of a person seeking medical intervention to minimise the impact of their impairment as far as this is possible.

According to the social model a person does not 'have' a disability – disability is something a person experiences. The disability experienced is often caused by the approach taken by society/individuals which fails to take account of people with impairments and their associated needs. This can result in people with impairments being excluded from mainstream society. For example; an individual is not prevented from reading a magazine because of blindness, but because of the absence of alternative formats. A person is not prevented from going to see a play because they are a wheelchair user rather it is the absence of accessible transport and access to venues that causes the disability and exclusion. The social model of disability also focuses on people's attitudes towards disability and recognises that attitudes towards disability can present barriers for disabled people in the same way the physical environment can. These attitudes are many and varied, ranging from prejudice and stereotyping, to unnecessary inflexible organisational practices and procedures and seeing disabled people as objects of pity / charity.

The social model of disability emerged from the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) that redefined disability in 2001. WHO declared disability an umbrella term with several components:

- **impairments:** a problem in body function or structure

- **activity limitations:** a difficulty encountered by a person in executing a task or action

- **participation restrictions:** a problem experienced by a person in involvement in life situations

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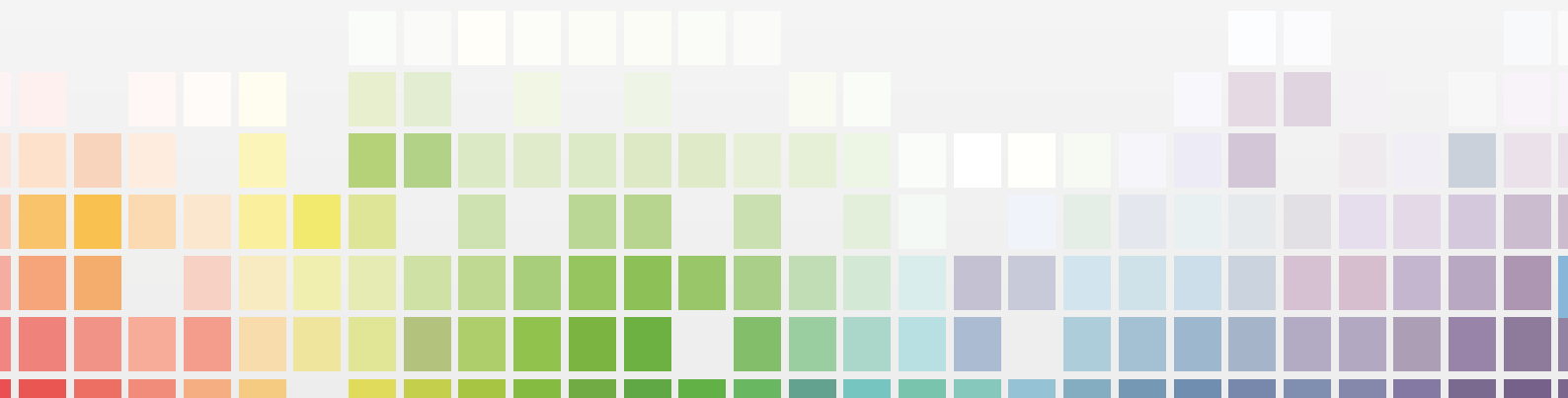
The Medical Model of Disability

The medical model looks at a person's impairment first and focuses on the impairment as the cause of disabled people being unable to access goods and services or being able to participate fully in society. Statements such as 'he can't read that newspaper because he's blind' are an example of people being influenced by the medical model of disability. It is this medical model that has informed the development and structure of the legislation, and is reflected in people's attitudes and associated negative outcomes. Aspects of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), in relation to disability discrimination, follow the medical model of disability as they focus on what a person is unable to do. The Act also sets out specific criterion which must be met if an individual is to be protected under the legislation.
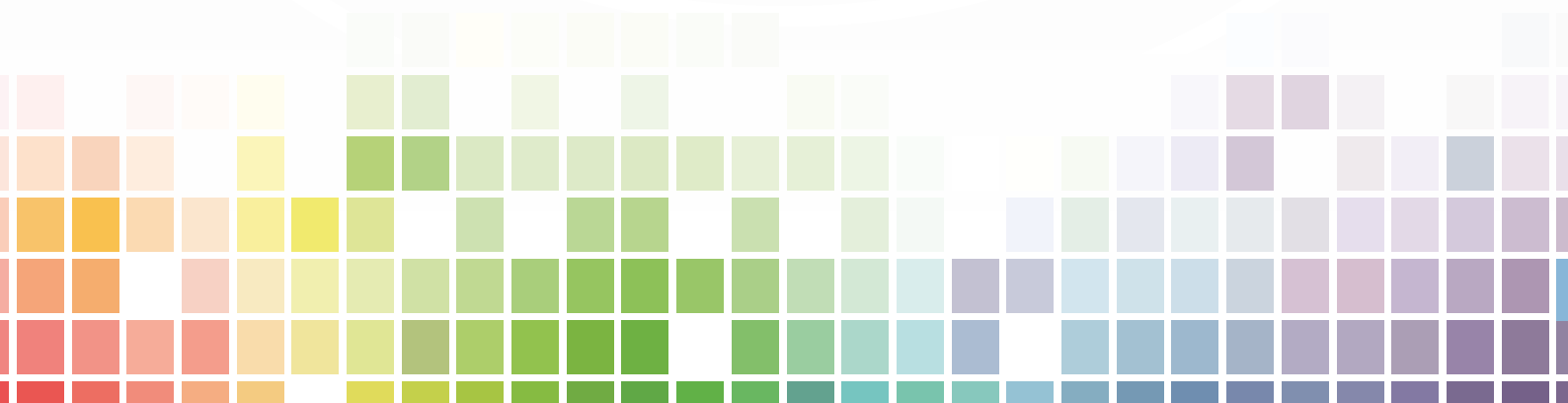
When we explore any of the following symptoms, it's important to keep in mind a spectrum of 0-10 in terms of how the disability effects the individual. For instance, you may encounter someone who has experienced a stroke but doesn't deem themselves to be disabled, whereas there are other people who have suffered from a stroke and have experienced the impact of symptoms more severely, therefore would class themselves as disabled. It is important to understand each individual's experience.

PHYSICAL	SENSORY	LEARNING DISABILITY	MENTAL ILLNESS
arthritis, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, motor neurone disease, stroke, diabetes, lupus, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury	blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, speech	down's syndrome	clinical depression, schizophrenia

Equality Act 2010 – Disability

- **Part 2:** Key Concepts (definition of disability & discrimination, duty to make adjustments)
- **Part 3:** Services & Public Functions
- **Part 4:** Premises (Businesses)
- **Part 5:** Work
- **Part 6:** Education
- **Part 7:** Associations (Sports Clubs)
- **Part 12:** Transport

Inclusion@Work

A Framework for Building a Disability-Inclusive Organisation

MEASURE SUCCESS
Accountability & Self-identification

LEAD THE WAY
Inclusive Business Culture

BE TECH SAVVY
Accessible Information & Communication Technology

BUILD THE PIPELINE
Outreach & Recruitment

COMMUNICATE
External & Internal Communication of Company Policies & Practices

HIRE (AND KEEP) THE BEST
Talent Acquisition & Retention Processes

ENSURE PRODUCTIVITY
Reasonable Accommodations

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Awareness of the needs of Disabled Employees

You can't assume somebody has a disability. You have to have the right and appropriate framework to a conversation which will allow that person to request reasonable adjustments.

Unless a potential candidate or employee has stated on their application form, you are not allowed to ask somebody if they have a disability. Employers are not expected to make a reasonable adjustment if the employee has not informed their workplace.

Having a reasonable adjustments option at the beginning of an application process is crucial. This gives the candidate the option to inform their workplace of any requirements they may have from the beginning of your recruitment process. However, candidates may not always complete this section out of fear of it hindering their job application. Creating an inclusive culture where employees feel they can be open and honest about their requirements is vital, so that once the disabled person is employed by the organisation, they feel empowered to communicate any reasonable adjustments. Staff networks can help to create an inclusive culture and increase the awareness of the needs of disabled employees. In addition, make sure that you have a robust equal opportunity statement that showcases your commitment to diversity and inclusion on your website and attached to any job applications.

Do not assume that someone needs reasonable adjustments due to their disability. Once the employee has made you aware that they have a disability, then ask the person what/if they have any requirements that the organisations can accommodate. This doesn't always just apply to people with disabilities, reasonable adjustments can be put in place for someone who has carers duties, or someone who requires work/life balance in order to carry out their responsibilities.

An Understanding of Good & Bad Practice

Review policies

Ensure that the policies that you have are not there for punitive measures. Punitive measures can be when a manager follows the policy to the letter and a person could end up with a final written warning. These types of punitive measures surpass the opportunity to have a conversation about reasonable adjustments. Having this question available from the beginning of the process can change the whole dynamic of the conversation. Policies should look at what stage employers should be pushing the question of 'are there any reasonable adjustments we can make?'. If a manager has good emotional intelligence and a policy is more flexible, then changes can be made to benefit the employee and employer, ultimately building trust to and build trust to work together.

Identify and change processes that support unconscious bias

Are your recruiting and hiring processes discouraging applicants with disabilities, or limiting their ability to demonstrate their strengths? This way of thinking also applies to people development and training processes. Even small changes in standard training programs can make a big difference.

Strengthen the hiring pipeline by engaging with community groups

One of the challenges companies encounter in tapping the talent pool of persons with disabilities is the very first step: identifying candidates. Persons with disabilities may be reluctant to apply for jobs they don't think they will get, and so their talent and interest remain under the hiring radar. Companies can start to build a robust recruitment pipeline in part by engaging with groups that support people with disabilities.

Inclusive Job Descriptions

Make sure your job postings are welcoming to workers of all abilities by advertising when there are accommodations such as flexible hours or telework policies that would appeal to disabled workers. Let applicants know your workplace welcomes and values all candidates with phrasing like: "Ability to complete tasks with or without reasonable accommodations." Instead of writing "Access to your own vehicle isn't always necessary", try "Access to reliable transportation". Some job descriptions are all in one block text with small lettering and no line spacing. The nature of this format can actually be inaccessible for neurodiverse people, again creating an unwelcoming experience, and increasing your chances of missing out on the great talents neurodiverse candidates can bring.

Provide a flexible but structured hiring process that works for all

Make sure hiring teams are equipped and resourced to find and hire the best talent, irrespective of any individual disabilities of potential candidates.

Understand different needs and reinforce equity at all hiring stages

Traditional assessment methods don't work for everyone, so it pays to broaden your mind in terms of how you evaluate skills. Microsoft, for example, has replaced job interviews with a vetting process where candidates with autism can better showcase their skills in a casual setting or by demonstrating their skills rather than talking about their skills.

An Understanding of Good & Bad Practice

Access and facilities Audit

If an organisation understands its facilities and the limitations it has, you can start to rule our making mistakes.

Workplace Assessments

Don't fall into the trap of asking for a workplace risk assessment. A workplace assessment is less challenging.

Manager Training – Make reasonable adjustments where necessary

It is essential that managers are provided with training on how to implement reasonable adjustments and are able to oversee this. HR professionals should be ready to make appropriate changes to the work environment throughout the hiring process and beyond.

Staff Training – Disability Awareness

Staff need to trust the intent of what the organisation is hoping to do and be able to support disabled colleagues and put this into practice. Banishing misconceptions and (unconscious) hiring bias means that employees work more effectively with their coworkers, whether they have a disability or not. So it pays to make inclusivity a formal part of your company's learning and development strategy and provide regular training for new and existing candidates.

ERG's

Building ERG's and network groups is a great way to increase awareness and provide a supportive community for disabled colleagues. If you are a smaller organisation and don't have the resources to create a network, developing awareness campaigns and delivering best practice workshops to colleagues can help to increase their understanding of disabilities. For example, you could have a session on how to make the workplace autism friendly for Autistic Awareness Month, and for Mental Health Awareness Week you could encourage colleagues to share their stories and train employees to become mental health awareness ambassadors.

Disability Confident

Become an employer that is Positive about Disabled People through the Disability Confident Scheme

Level 1 - Committed
Level 2 - Being a Disability Confident employer
Level 3 - Being a Disability Confident leader

The Government scheme challenges employers to

- Increase your understanding of disability

- Challenge attitudes towards disability

- Remove barriers to disabled people and those with long term health conditions in employment

- Ensure that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations

Tools to assist you

Understand your business, roles and facilities.

Create a mutually supportive community - Training programs and opportunities to connect with other employees will help ensure that persons with disabilities develop and succeed. Mentoring and coaching programmes are also vital initiatives.

Show (don't just tell) that you're an equal employer - An equal opportunity employer disclaimer on your job ads is a good way to declare that you promote diversity. There are also other tangible ways of sharing your message. Include pictures of your accessible working spaces on social media and your careers page. If you've already hired employees with a disability, ask them if they'd like to share a story from their work life with their network, local communities or even a broader audience. By showing the steps you take to provide equal opportunities for every employee, you send a strong message both to candidates and other companies: Inclusion in the workplace isn't just a theory; it's a reality.

Seek out advice from local organisations specialising in this area. Some job centre's have disability employment advisors who can provide advice.

Listen to staff!

Consider making Reasonable adjustments: (The key word here is reasonable)

Remember, the world is built with 'everyone else' in mind and simple adjustments can be the difference between an employee succeeding and failing in their role. Employers often have the common misconception that it'll be costly to employ someone with a disability, when frequently this is not the case with only minor and simple adjustments required.

Re-allocation of duties

Is there something your organisation can do to ensure disabled employees are able to carry out their responsibilities? This may be re-allocating duties to other team members and vice versa. Many employers are now utilizing 'Job Carving' to tailor a job that it is suitable for a particular employee.

Transfer, altering hours, place of work

Remote working is of great benefit to some roles, individuals and businesses. In this vastly changing working landscape employers should embrace remote working and make it as accessible as possible to all employees.

Time off for treatment

If an employee is aware they will need to take time off, have this conversation to ensure the business is able to support this. Explain to the employee their entitlement to taking reasonable time off or this could be arranging a structure where an employee could work hours in lieu or take time off as part of holidays.

Consider making Reasonable adjustments: (The key word here is reasonable)

Modify equipment and training

Ensure the employee has the right equipment for the right job.

Providing assistance

E.g. a reader if the employee is blind, a PA or interpreter if the person is deaf. The Department for Work & Pensions and Access to Work scheme will not employee 2 people to do 1 job, but they will assist by providing a support worker to do part of the job.

Adjustments to premises

Get the right advice, don't simply start knocking down walls if its not needed. Check with the individual first and find out exactly what it is that they need. It could be something as simple as ensuring there is a quiet area available for an autistic employee, or creating a larger desk area for a wheelchair user.

National Support: 'Access to Work' Funding – 0345 268 8489

Making work possible – gov.uk/access-to-work

Access to Work support covers a wide range of interventions beyond 'reasonable adjustments' associated with overcoming work-related barriers resulting from disability. AtW will look at any way they are able to support a disabled person maintain their job and it is also appliable for looking at architectural work as well. The support package is agreed based on the individuals need and it is the individual that has to make the call to AtW, and not the employer on their behalf.

For employees that have acquired a disability during their working life (83% of disabled people), there are not many people who know exactly what resources are available. In this case, get your Human Resources team or a senior leader to contact a local agency that specialises in employment and disability and ask them what reasonable adjustments could involve. When calling Access to Work, they will ask you what you need, and if you don't know, they can't help you. It is therefore crucial to get the right information, and the right support.

Other useful sources:

https://www.remploy.co.uk/

https://www.shawtrust.org.uk/

https://www.scope.org.uk/employment-services/

https://aod.org.uk/employment-services/

https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment-services

https://www.pluss.org.uk/

https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/