

---

# A Recruiter's Introduction to Workplace Adjustments



---

## Introduction

This guidance is part of **The Disability Confident Employers' Toolkit**: a unique portfolio of the practical guides, checklists, case studies and resources that make it easier for any business to deliver the best practice we call 'Disability Confidence'.

These resources are grounded in the reality of business and best corporate practice, and in the principles that underpin the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - a UN Convention which, in turn, shapes legislation, and societal expectations, in 181 countries.

With this portfolio of business relevant resources, we aim:

- to make it easier to employ persons with disabilities fairly, on the basis of individual capability, talent and potential
- to help engineer more effective, efficient, and equitable labour markets, which because employers are positioned as valued service users and potential allies, enable significantly more persons with disabilities to gain meaningful employment
- to enable the business improvement which benefits both the business and persons with disabilities
- To create opportunities for businesses to become leaders in the transition to accessible and inclusive workplaces
- to facilitate innovative solutions focused collaboration between business leaders and leaders with disabilities.

**The Disability Confident Employers' Toolkit** is produced by **Inclusion Works**, a consortium of leading international Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), led by Sightsavers, working in partnership with business leaders in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda.

We are grateful to our funder UKAID for supporting this pioneering work. We would like to thank The International Labour Organisation's Global Business Disability Network and the national business disability networks in Bangladesh and Kenya for their invaluable contribution. In addition, we extend our thanks to members of the International Disability Alliance Livelihoods Task Team for their overview of the documents with a disability lens and to staff members of Sightsavers for their very practical assistance.

For further information about this open source Employers' Toolkit contact your national business disability networks or Sightsavers at [inclusionworks@sightsavers.org](mailto:inclusionworks@sightsavers.org).



**Susan Scott-Parker**

Author

Founder Business Disability  
Forum and Business Disability  
International

ZeroProject Ambassador

PurpleLightUp Ambassador

**Simon Brown**

Global Technical Lead for  
Economic Empowerment

Inclusion Works, a part of the  
Inclusive Futures programme

Sightsavers



---

# Enabling Candidates with Disabilities to Compete Fairly on the Basis of their Individual Capability and Potential

The building blocks of best practice include ensuring that the company:

- creates a barrier free recruitment process which also adapts for individuals, so that everyone can compete fairly, on the basis of equal opportunities
- encourages recruiters and managers to keep an open mind and not assume that only specific jobs can be done by, or should be reserved for, people with disabilities
- understands that we treat people differently in order to treat them fairly - this is called making the reasonable adjustments (sometimes called accommodations) that create a level playing field for every candidate, particularly candidates with disabilities
- does not use pre-employment medicals or psychometric tests to screen out candidates on grounds of medical history or disability (unless so required by law)
- does not operate blanket exclusions for groups of people with disabilities. It is not acceptable to say: “we do not consider applicants from that school or who have a history of mental ill health, or who are blind.” These types of blanket exclusions are inherently discriminatory and will be unlawful in many jurisdictions
- expects the hiring managers to focus on the candidate’s ability, not disability. The question should be: “how could this person contribute to our business if we were flexible and clever in how we adapt the way we do things?” And to ask the individual at every stage of the process: “How could we make it easier for you to succeed?”
- efficiently delivers those adjustments post job offer which enable the successful candidate to begin to do the job as quickly and with as little fuss as anyone else; and has built-in review points afterwards, to ensure these adjustments remain fit for purpose
- understands that HR alone cannot be held responsible for providing all employees with the tools, the accessible and usable built environment, and the flexibility that they require. Workplace adjustment-related performance standards are also needed for IT, Property and Facilities Management, Procurement, Health and Safety, Occupational Health, with learning and development to enable co-worker buy-in and support
- aims for the best practice which transforms its legal obligations to the mutual benefit of both business and persons with disabilities
- recognises that people with disabilities will aspire to develop their careers and should be considered for all levels of position.

Awareness that everyone is different is key to disability confident recruitment. Knowing when and how to change the way work can be done is called making reasonable adjustments.

### **Adjustments: transforming legal obligation to mutual benefit**

The term “reasonable adjustments”, widely used by global business, was introduced in this context by the UK Disability Discrimination Act (1995.) Other legal frameworks, notably the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), use the phrase: “reasonable accommodations”. Failure to make reasonable adjustments or accommodations is unlawful in a growing number of jurisdictions.

Both terms are equivalent in meaning and expect managers to routinely provide all employees with the tools, flexibility, and adjustments they need if they are to do their best, and to deploy the disability and accessibility expertise required to ensure that every candidate and every employee with a disability can also realise their potential on an equal basis.

It is also recognised that organisations often make adjustments that go beyond legal obligations for a wide range of employees, for example childcare, flexitime, gym memberships, remote working, noise cancelling headsets. This is keeping with the goal of full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

Susan Scott Parker

## Who are reasonable adjustments for?

To illustrate: Shell International's policy states:

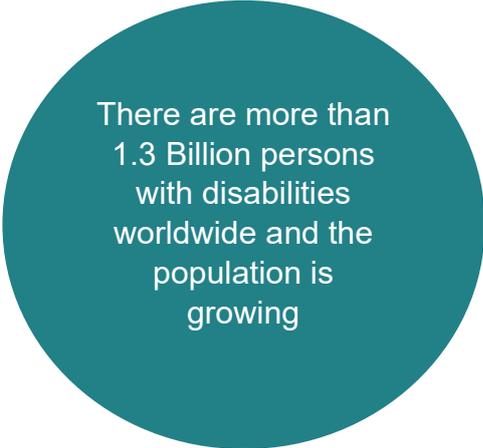
"Who are Adjustments for?

All employees and candidates for employment who encounter circumstances which mean that they need, for a short or a long term period, a workplace adjustment - this may be as a result of injury, illness, health condition, disability or pregnancy. Adjustments may also be granted on a temporary basis to support employees with exceptional caring responsibilities."

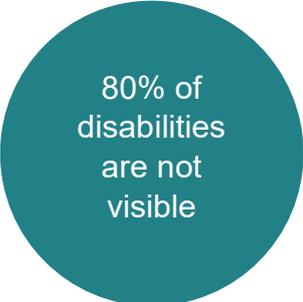
The term "persons with disabilities" covers a very wide range of people.

181 countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which uses the following definition:

- people with disabilities include those with long term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.



There are more than 1.3 Billion persons with disabilities worldwide and the population is growing



80% of disabilities are not visible

Skilled recruiters:

- remove obstacles in advance for people who have the most frequently encountered access needs
- strives to create a universal design approach i.e. ramps benefit others than those using a wheelchair and policies written in accessible language instead of legalese are easier for all employees to understand
- understand that most disabilities are not visible
- focus on talent and potential and ask all candidates: "How can we make it easier for you to succeed?"

**The aim being to create a fair, barrier free and flexible recruitment and employment experience, that empowers a much wider pool of candidates and colleagues to contribute to business success.**

## What kind of 'adjustments' or 'accommodations' are we talking about?

### There are 8 kinds of workplace/recruitment adjustments:



What must the employer do differently to recruit this particular candidate fairly on the basis of capability and their potential?

Nothing: just give her the chance to compete and treat her fairly

1. 'Think' differently: challenge assumptions about groups: move from "deaf people can't work in teams" to "what can this deaf person do?"
2. Create an accessible build environment: access to premises, signage, lighting, good acoustics.
3. Tolerate a process which might take a bit longer to attract, to assess individual capability, to adapt and to induct.
4. Change procedures and policies, bypass standard interviews, allow flexitime in induction, revise job descriptions.
5. Train managers, colleagues, recruiters, IT etc.
6. Welcome human aides: job coaches, interpreters, personal assistants, captioners etc.
7. Remove barriers created by online recruitment and related policies; enable access to assisted devices and specialist software.
8. Invest in targeted recruitment projects to tap into a new talent pool.

### A few examples to illustrate that the focus for adjustments is on practical solutions

- enable a candidate who cannot access an online recruitment process to apply via a different channel. Better still, first ensure the end-to-end online process, including the website, is accessible
- provide the application forms in an accessible format
- provide alternative route through the recruitment process. For example, enable a candidate who cannot hear or who stammers to bypass the telephone interview
- bypass psychometric tests and AI-powered assessments unless there is evidence that they have been validated for job seekers with the individual's disability, and it is certain the tests are in themselves accessible and usable
- be open to considering alternative educational backgrounds or alternative experience of a candidate rather than relying on traditional work experience. Consider that the person may well have been denied those opportunities for reasons that have nothing to do with their career potential
- move the interview of a candidate who has a mobility impairment from up a flight of stairs to an accessible ground floor room

- invite candidates to describe the mitigating circumstances if their academic scores are below what would normally be required, while challenging the assumption that certain academic qualifications are in fact essential for the job
- allow candidates to use human and/or technology communication aides as 'adjustments' throughout the process, so that they can demonstrate their true capability and potential and then to continue with those aids in the workplace if needed
- provide candidates via multi-channels (not just phone or email) with detailed information regarding the recruitment process, so that they can help you to anticipate any adjustments that might be needed at any stage
- offer candidates with disabilities for whom the online and/or assessment process presents as an access obstacle, extra time, and support to complete application forms, tests, assessments...
- enable candidates who are disadvantaged by traditional interviews to bypass the standard process and demonstrate their potential via extended interviews, job try-outs or other creative assessment alternatives.

---

## Defining the Best Practice called “Disability Confidence”

### Disability confident recruiters:

- understand how disability, and the company’s disability related performance, affects their ability to recruit from the widest talent pool. They communicate the need to recruit everyone, including people with disabilities on the basis of capabilities and potential, and consistently reinforce the need for a best practice culture, going beyond basic legal compliance
- learn directly from persons with disabilities as colleagues, potential colleagues, and community stakeholders, and act on what is learned. They build the productive personal relationships with people with disabilities and their organisations which make collaboration and mutual support achievable
- communicate their interest in recruiting persons with disabilities widely, through multiple channels, and in partnership with Disabled Peoples Organisations and individuals with disabilities
- remove obstacles in the recruitment process which unfairly prevent or hinder groups of people with similar disabilities from competing fairly (i.e. providing ramps for people with mobility impairments; providing accessible application forms for job seekers using voice activated software)
- make adjustments which enable individual candidates to navigate the recruitment process and demonstrate their potential, given individuals with the same disability will often do the same task differently
- understand that the provision of adjustments, for example providing employees with the tools and flexibility that they require, is a managerial not a medical responsibility
- understand that most job seekers with disabilities do not require expensive and/or complex workplace adjustments. They also know that enabling colleagues to have the tools and flexibility they need in order to contribute enhances productivity and employee engagement, while reducing turnover and reputation and legal risks
- respect confidentiality regarding an individual’s disability and/or health condition
- do not make assumptions about human potential on the basis of any ‘label’
- communicate widely across the business:



- we treat people differently in order to treat them fairly
- ‘equal opportunities’ does NOT mean we treat everyone exactly the same
- we cannot have meaningful ‘diversity’ until we are confident that we do not inadvertently exclude or unfairly discriminate against persons with disabilities
- we will make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities even when not required to do so by local legislation
- ensure that their IT and Facilities Departments work to the disability and accessibility-related performance standards which help deliver adjustments quickly
- do not require managers to pay for adjustments needed at any stage of the recruitment and onboarding process, as this all too often delays implementation
- routinely invite feedback from candidates, successful and unsuccessful, to ensure continuous improvement to the recruitment process
- routinely review their recruitment process, end to end. For this purpose, use such tools such as the more detailed [Inclusion Works Recruiters Checklist for Disability Confident Employers](#).

Susan Scott-Parker

Business Disability International

