



How to make your recruitment process accessible

When it comes to recruitment, it's important to get it right to make sure you find the best candidate for the role. Disabled, Deaf and neurodivergent people have a lot to offer companies but sometimes, job interviews are not set up to be accessible.

As employers, it can often feel overwhelming when it comes to making sure that you are making the recruitment process - from advert to interview to hiring - as accessible as possible. It's actually not as difficult as you might think as there are several different steps you can take to make sure that you are opening the job to disabled people

What is the Equality Act 2010 and what are my responsibilities?

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and society. You cannot discriminate based on several protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Discrimination can be anything that puts someone with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage in the workplace or social life. For example, this could mean excluding someone from your hiring process due to disability or making it harder for a disabled person to do their job.

You must take steps to ensure you are not unfairly discriminating against anyone including at the hiring stages for a new role. Employers must also make reasonable adjustments for employees. There are several ways you can do this in the hiring process outlined in this resource.

Here is our resource on how you can make the hiring process accessible.

What is a disability?

Under the Equality Act 2010: a disability is defined as a physical or mental condition that has a long-term and substantial effect on your daily life.

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term that refers to several conditions such as autism, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), Tourette's Syndrome, dyslexia, dyscalculia and Dyspraxia.

Placing an advert

Wording

Keep it simple. Don't overcomplicate a job role by adding lots of buzzwords, jargon, acronyms or information that people may not need. You may know what you mean but others might not!

Some neurodivergent people may struggle to read large blocks of text. Stick to what people need to know and make it clear how they get in contact if they need more information.

When it comes to fonts choose something easy to read such as sans serif fonts like Verdana or Ariel, break up text with spacing and headings so that it is easier to read.

- Why not consider alternatives such as video links with British Sign Language or downloadable job information? Having all the information in one place reduces the level of panic that someone may feel trying to find different bits of information like location or time in a hurry. You could also have a link to a page that outlines what steps are in place for job applications to make them more accessible if people need it.

Colour scheme

Check there is enough of a contrast between the lettering and background if you are choosing to place adverts that aren't black and white. Visually impaired people may struggle to read something that doesn't have enough contrast. You can check the contrast online to see if it passes the test.

Alt text

If you have used an image or have posted the job on social media with an image, then you need to add alt text. This is a short description of what the image is and why it is there so that anyone using a screen reader can understand.

Links

Use a descriptive sentence that tells a person what the link in a block of text is rather than just highlighting the odd word randomly.

Website audits

If you are going to refer someone to your website for more information: has your website had an audit to see if it is accessible? This could be checking to see that information or sequences are easy to follow or understand or that it works with technology like screen readers or that the colour contrast works so that visually impaired people can access the content.

Contact

Make it clear who needs to be contacted and the best way to do this. This could be a form, email, or phone number that people can clearly access. Someone will need to keep an eye on whatever email or phone number in case there is a query, and they need to be fully briefed on what to do. This will likely be the first person from the company that a candidate speaks to, so they need to be informative and make a good first impression!

Placement

Consider where you are placing the advert and if it is likely to be seen by a diverse audience. Are there platforms you could use that cater to disabled people where they are more likely to see the advert and apply? Consider posting the position outside of the usual channels that you use for job adverts.

Alternative forms

Why not offer an alternative format for application forms? Some neurodivergent people may struggle with complicated forms and deadlines. You could consider using video or allowing people to email cover letters or CVs to you without using the forms.

Similarly, automatic time-out settings on websites might be difficult for people using assistive technology or neurodivergent people. It can be frustrating to have a website log you out mid-application only to have to go back in repeatedly! Is it possible to set the application process to allow longer lengths of time or could you remove the time-sensitive automatic log-out?

What do I need to include?

- Stating that you have an equal opportunity employment policy in place is good practice. It will communicate that you will consider applications from people regardless of race, disability, religious beliefs, age, gender, or sexuality.

- Check the job description only includes skills that a person needs to be able to do their job. Don't add that someone needs to have a driver's licence if they don't need to drive to be able to do the job. This indirectly discriminates against some disabled people who may not be able to drive.
- Openly stating that you welcome applications from disabled, Deaf or neurodivergent candidates can encourage people to apply. Similarly, adding that you have signed up and completed the Disability Confidence scheme.

Disability Confident scheme

Disability Confident is a voluntary government initiative which aims to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people. There are three levels:

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Level 1: Disability Confident Committed

Level 2: Disability Confident Employer

Level 3: Disability Confident Leader

You will need to self-assess your business for levels 1 and 2 but are assessed externally for Level 3. The assessments are ongoing as you will need to renew them over time. The symbol can be used in adverts to show you are committed to employing disabled people. It also provides information, support and links about different conditions and reasonable adjustments you could make to best support potential employees.

Notifying unsuccessful and successful applicants

- Always offer feedback: it's good practice to let someone know if they haven't been successful. People can spend hours perfecting their applications so letting them know even if the news isn't good acknowledges the effort they have made.
- If you do decide to offer feedback: keep it constructive and be mindful of how you speak to someone so that they know why or what they can improve on.
- Rejection sensitivity dysphoria: Some neurodivergent candidates may struggle with rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD) where they feel the pain of rejection more intensely. It may also take them longer to process why they may not have been successful and that it is not personal. Being understanding, sympathetic and kind can go a long way.

Holding the job interview

The right venue

Choosing a venue to hold a job interview means you will need to do a venue audit to see where might be suitable. You could select somewhere external or keep the interviews in the office you are already based in. Either way, it's a good idea to have a throughout check of the venue and location to make sure it works.

If you need more advice on how to select an accessible venue: we offer a free detailed resource on venues.

Do you need a venue at all?

Could the interview be conducted online or over the phone instead? Sometimes, it can be tricky or costly to travel so it could save time and money to have a virtual interview instead. Some disabled/neurodivergent

people may find train travel difficult so if it's not essential to have someone interview in person: consider doing it online.

Virtual interviews will have accessibility considerations that are different from face-to-face interviews. Here are some to introduce into your online interviews:

- Provide clear and easy-to-understand instructions and links on how to join the interview
- Test any equipment and broadband if needed ahead of the interview as this may determine where you conduct the online interviews if one room has a stronger signal etc.
- Consider providing the questions in advance or over the chat option
- Ask, if possible, if they have a preferred online video platform such as Google Teams or Zoom
- Audio describe anything that appears onscreen when screen sharing as screen readers are not compatible
- Allow cameras off if you can or if the person requests it
- Consider providing captions in live transcripts
- Check that you are in the best possible light and that you can be seen clearly. Seat yourself away from the glare of a window.
- Be flexible - technology breaks which can be very stressful! Similarly, people may have pets or children that pop up mid-interview unannounced.
- Don't panic if technology doesn't work - reschedule the interview if you can't fix it.

Space

Candidates who use a wheelchair will need space to access the room freely. Ask if they would like to remain in their wheelchair or if they would like to transfer to one of the office chairs. You can then leave space or provide a chair according to their answer. But do ask - don't assume a person's needs or preferences!

Attitude and friendliness

We've all been there - job interviews are incredibly stressful! Whatever your role in the hiring process, your first impression on a candidate is as important as theirs on you. Being positive and friendly can make a huge difference to how relaxed someone feels going into an interview and how they feel about potentially joining your company. Disabled people may have experienced discrimination in the past which could make them worried about how they will be treated both at interview stages and if they are successful. Don't panic or overreact, just be friendly, professional and relaxed- treat someone like you would like to be treated at a job interview.

- Communication - Don't assume that you know what someone's access requirements are. It is good practice to send an email asking if they have any requirements ahead of time.
- Smaller tables - A smaller table set-up is better for candidates with hidden disabilities as it can reduce stress or discomfort.
- Disclosing - Don't expect someone to disclose a disability in advance.
Some candidates may feel comfortable, but others may not. There are a lot of disabilities that are hidden such as neurodivergent conditions, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, partial sight and hearing loss.

Provide the information in advance

Let someone know what to expect from the interview. This could be the running order, the time they will be interviewed if there are multiple

candidates or when the breaks or finish times are. This is helpful for candidates who might be autistic or have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

Bathrooms

Make sure that the candidate knows where the bathrooms are and that they are unlocked. Also, check that they are clean and presentable. The red cord needs to be in working condition. A red chord is an alarm system that when activated, lets you know that someone in the bathroom may need assistance.

Quiet rooms

While all candidates can benefit from a nice welcome and a quiet room to wait in pre-interview, for those with neurodivergent conditions, it makes a huge difference. It can help to make someone feel more relaxed, less stressed and help prevent meltdowns. A meltdown is an intense response to an overwhelming situation which a job interview might be. It happens when someone becomes completely overwhelmed and temporarily loses control of their behaviour.

Less background noise

Check that the room where you are holding the interview is free from background noise. This could be the whirring of a fan or noise from outside the window. Try to limit the amount of noise which will make it easier for someone to concentrate or hear you.

Consider your questions

Some people with disabilities such as autism may find answering open questions more difficult. It can be hard to figure out how much to disclose or how much information is too much. Swapping questions to get them to tell you about a time when they did something related to the role (e.g- tell me about a time you had to make a difficult management decision etc) allows a much more relatable and specific answer. Also, avoid multiple questions in one as some neurodivergent people may struggle with

knowing which part of the question to answer in what order or forget to answer a part.

For example: Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult management decision; how did you implement this, what was the reaction and how did you manage your team? You could ask the first half of this question, wait until the person has answered then ask the next part so that you give them a chance to answer all parts without panicking or overloading them with information.

Understanding

In interviews, we are often told that a firm handshake and confident eye contact are good skills to have. However, for some people, this may be incredibly difficult as neurodivergent people may struggle with eye contact or someone may struggle with handshakes due to conditions such as arthritis. Understand that this might be difficult for someone and don't exclude them because of it.

Lip reading

If someone is lip reading in a job interview: make sure you are facing them, in a well-lit room with nothing covering your mouth area. Avoid positioning yourself in front of a window as the light can make it difficult for someone to see and be aware that light changes throughout the day. If you are unsure if the lighting works - ask and be prepared to make changes if required.

Interpreters

If you are using an interpreter, remember to book in advance and address your questions to the interviewee, not the interpreter.

Video Content

If you are using video as part of the interview -providing captions is essential. It can be easy to add subtitles to a video through different apps such as Veed or Capcut. Some social media apps may also allow you to

add captions. You could also consider providing a link to where candidates can watch it outside of the interview too.

- Break up the day - If an interview is going to take longer than an hour then you need to factor in breaks. Let the candidates know that they can ask for a break if they need one.
- Loop systems - ensure that you have loop systems available for Deaf or hearing-impaired candidates. They are inexpensive devices which can make such a difference.
- Stimming - Some neurodivergent candidates may use stimming behaviours to help keep themselves focused or calm during an interview. For some, this may be noises or repetitive movements such as hair pulling, rocking, squeals or squeaks.
- Provide the questions ahead of time or on paper that day - It can be handy for some candidates to prepare ahead of time or be able to refer to the question in front of them. Some neurodivergent candidates may need time to think about their answers or understand the question.
- Water - If someone has an assistance animal with them, why not provide a dish of water where they can reach it?

Tasks

Some employers may like candidates to perform tasks to test their suitability for the role. It's important to keep in mind that these will need to be accessible as well.

- Is the task suitable for the role? Are you asking someone to do a math test if they won't need to do this in the role or is the task very creative if the role is more numbers orientated?
- Timing: Be flexible with time constraints on a test

- Handwriting: Writing might be difficult for some so think about how you could present the questions/tasks so they are easily answered. This could be multiple choice, audio or video options.

Consider the text

Is the task compatible with screen readers or other assistive technology? Could you use a larger font or is there enough colour contrast between lettering and image? Is there alt text on any images used?

Final stages: Feedback

It's a good idea to ask candidates how they found the hiring process and allow them to be honest. This is an opportunity to gain valuable insight into what worked and what didn't work from personal experience. It also allows you a chance to put it into practice next time.

Why not consider disability awareness training for staff?

We offer face-to-face or virtual training options with expert trainers.

Why not [visit our website](#) to see what options we offer.