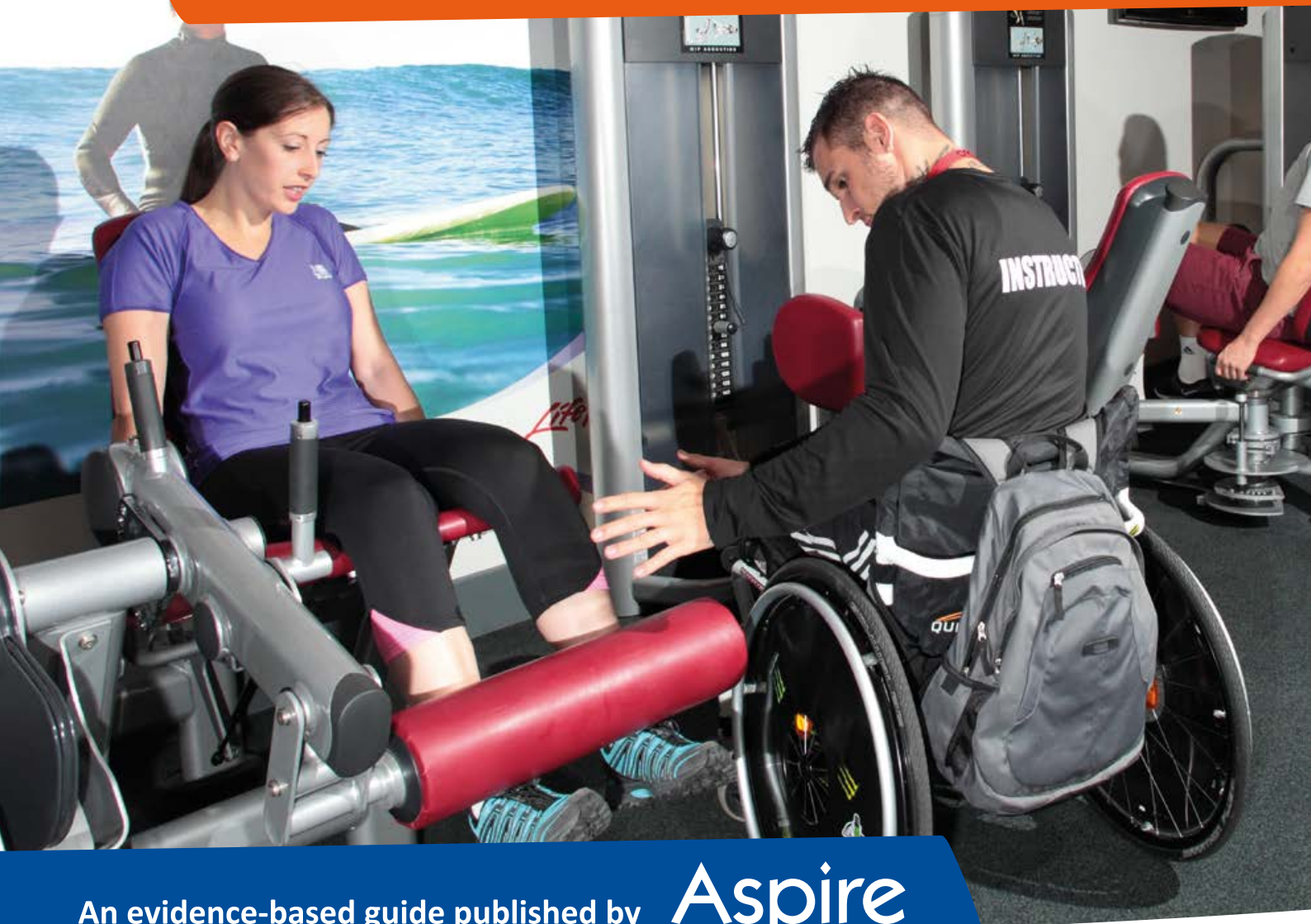


Employing disabled people in the fitness and leisure sector

Guide C: For Employers



An evidence-based guide published by **Aspire**

Informed by independent
leisure sector research



Forewords

The Aspire Leisure Centre has been employing disabled people in a variety of staff roles since the early 1990's.

In addition to being a national spinal injury charity and inclusive community leisure facility, Aspire pioneered a pan-disability leisure workforce programme, called, 'InstructAbility'. The programme enabled hundreds of disabled people with physical, sensory, cognitive and mental health difficulties, to gain industry qualifications and subsequent employment with a vast range of leisure operators.

We commissioned independent, academic research to understand and share the best way to overcome barriers that stop disabled people being part of the leisure sector workforce. We sought advice from disabled people and those involved in leisure sector training, recruitment and employment. As a result, we have now produced a three-part set of evidence-based Guides full of recommendations and practical advice for disabled people, training providers and employers.

Our aim is to work collectively to develop a sector in which disabled people feel confident and valued as employees, and where they can trust that training and professional development will be equally accessible to them as their non-disabled peers. This will attract more disabled people to work in the industry and therefore bring down barriers for customers and staff alike.

This can only be achieved if everyone involved plays their part in creating this change. As a leisure sector employer, we hope you will play your part by adopting these guidelines across your organisation and welcome more disabled people into your workforce.

Brian Carlin

Aspire CEO

Hilary Farmiloe

InstructAbility Strategic Lead



“ To reduce the unacceptable participation gap that exists between disabled and non-disabled people we need a more diverse workforce. This programme has been a game changer, providing career opportunities to disabled

people and creating more accessible and welcoming training environments and places for people to be active. We are proud to have invested in ‘InstructAbility’ and will strive, alongside our partners, to ensure these guidelines, based on extensive research

with disabled people, are a key tool to enable our sector to become more diverse. ”

Tim Hollingsworth
Sport England CEO

“ CIMSPA is the professional development body for the UK’s sport and physical activity sector, committed to developing and enabling professionals and organisations to succeed and, as a result, inspire our nation to become more active. As your chartered institute, we are here for the whole sector’s development, working to make sure

that we represent a diverse sector that everyone wants to be a part of. Working alongside Aspire, it is important to us that we can help everyone find a course and support their journey to employment in inclusive, accessible and welcoming training environments. CIMSPA are supportive of Aspire’s new guidelines which are a great toolkit for ensuring

that the sector is accessible to everyone working in it. It’s essential as a sector that career opportunities are accessible and that our workforce footprint is representative of the society that we serve. ”

Tara Dillon
CIMSPA CEO

“ ukactive exists to improve the health of the nation by promoting active lifestyles. We do this by supporting our members with services to help them grow, and facilitating partnerships for a broad range of organisations, all of which support our mission to get more people, more active, more often. We want to encourage and celebrate

inclusion and diversity, and are committed to ensuring that more people from all backgrounds are more active. And that is why we support Aspire’s Industry Guidance and ‘InstructAbility’ programme with the ambition to create a sector that is equally and freely accessed by disabled people, enabling them to participate

in whatever capacity they wish. Together, we can make sure that everyone has the opportunity to discover and enjoy the mental and physical benefits of physical activity. ”

Huw Edwards
CEO ukactive



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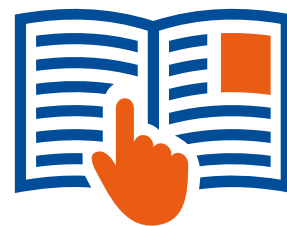
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Part A

About this Guide





Using this Guide

This Guide is one part of a three-part publication:

- **Guide A:** For disabled people.
- **Guide B:** For training providers & awarding organisations.
- **Guide C:** For fitness and leisure sector employers.

This Guide C is for you if you are:

An organisation seeking to:

- Increase the number of disabled people employed within your organisation.
- Offer work-based opportunities such as work experience, placements and apprenticeships to disabled people.
- Increase your disabled customer base.
- Become an inclusive and disability confident employer.

We also recommend you view Guide B for Training Providers, for information on how to ensure any training delivered to your staff is accessible to and inclusive of disabled people.

1.1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Guide is to offer information and recommendations for leisure sector employers. It details how to develop policies and practices that enhance accessibility for disabled staff, that are underpinned by an inclusive workplace culture. More specifically, how to:

- Reach disabled people and attract them to opportunities in your organisations.
- Create an inclusive environment for all staff.
- Provide reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people are not substantially disadvantaged compared to non-disabled people when searching and applying for, and undertaking job roles.

The research evidence for the content of this document, and the examples, quotes and case studies are drawn from the fitness and leisure industry. We will refer to the fitness and leisure sector to mean jobs related to physical exercise (e.g., gym instructor, personal trainer, swimming teacher, group exercise leader).

Many of the strategies offered, however, may also be relevant to any organisation wishing to increase the diversity of their workforce and promote the inclusion of disabled people in professional roles at all levels across the leisure, sport and physical activity sector.

Other information

Definition

Throughout this Guide we will refer to 'disabled people' to mean:

- People with a visible or non-visible impairment, illness, health condition or differing function,
- in combination with social and material barriers,
- that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on their ability to perform typical day-to-day activities.

References

References to additional useful information have a website address and a direct hyperlink to the page for those using digital devices. If the page is moved on an organisation's website the link will no longer work. In this instance, we suggest you contact the organisation directly for the information. References and links to websites in this guide do not imply endorsement or support of any of the linked information, services, products, or providers.

1.2 Legal requirements and good practice

Being fully inclusive, requires more than just meeting legal obligations. This Guide does give advice and practical examples on how to implement reasonable adjustments as required by law. However, it also highlights how to encourage disabled people to apply for positions within your organisation and how to make jobs more accessible.

Reasonable adjustments are changes to the environment that allow disabled people to work safely, productively and in a manner that is equal to non-disabled people

Reasonable adjustments should never be viewed as a favour or something which the disabled person should be particularly grateful for. The employee is simply providing staff with the tools and environment they require to do their job.

Reasonable adjustments do not always have to be extensive, complicated, or expensive and in many cases they also benefit other staff. More general information about reasonable adjustments can be found at:

- Recruitment. ¹
- Disabled Workers. ²

Positive Action

Under the [Equality Act 2010 legislation](#) ³ it is lawful for employers to take ‘positive action’ to encourage and train people from under-represented groups to help them overcome disadvantages when competing with others. Targeting disability networks with job adverts or offering work placements specifically for disabled people is one example of ‘positive action’.

An employer is lawfully allowed to treat a disabled person more favourably in comparison to a non-disabled person for recruitment and promotion, when they are of a similar standard.

An employer may also recruit a disabled person over a non-disabled person if lived experience of disability is integral to the work. For example, an inclusion role that needs to be disabled person led.

It is unlawful to favour one type of impairment over another unless it is an essential part of the job. For example, you cannot favour a stroke survivor over an amputee, unless the job was to lead a stroke survivors’ peer mentoring programme.

[Employers Direct](#) ⁴ is a free legal advice line for UK businesses.

1.3 Using the different sections of this Guide

The Guide is divided into three parts, which are split into further sections. The three main parts of the Guide are:

Part A. About this Guide

Part A provides context as to how and why to adopt the guidance. Part A includes sections 1-2.

Part B. Advice and recommendations

Part B contains guidance that you can use to review and action plan against. Part B includes sections 3-12.

Part C. More information

Part C provides further information and a leisure centre case study to help you understand more about disability and inclusion. Part C includes sections 13-17.



Every organisation will be at different stages of the journey to becoming fully inclusive, and may wish to address different priorities at different times depending on their organisation's current objectives, policies and procedures. Part B 'Advice and recommendations' has been ordered to reflect a journey from start to finish. However, you can use the different sections over time, and in any order, as necessary. You may also want to assign different guidance sections to relevant members of staff who can undertake a review and produce and oversee an action plan.

“ It's all about culture change. It's about having that right mind-set and commitment from the management team, that says: 'We are going to embrace this, but we accept it's not going to happen over-night and we are going to come up against some barriers.'

You will have to learn some things along the way, but start somewhere and make more jobs accessible to more disabled people. Use the information in this Guide, be realistic and ask advice along the way from the likes of relevant disability organisations. ”

**Disabled employee at
a national disability organisation**



The checklist below outlines the key recommendations provided within this Guide. This summary may help you understand the content of each section and find specific information quickly. You may also choose to use the checklists to review the extent to which your current practices meet with these guidelines.

Aim	Preparing the workforce	Section	Page
1	Support and communications from the top	3.1-3.4	21-26
2	Senior management and all staff have disability knowledge & awareness	3.3 & 14-16	25 & 76-82
3	Recruitment staff are trained to deal with enquiries and adjustments	4	35
4	Relevant staff know how to create accessible digital communications	12	63
5	Marketing staff know how to include disabled people in resources	11	60
6	Interviewers are trained in disability awareness and unconscious bias	6	40

Aim	Implementing actions	Section	Page
7	Jobs are proactively advertised to disable people	3.1-3.4	21-26
8	All job information includes details about equality and inclusion	3.3 & 14-16	25 & 76-82
9	Physical workplace environments are accessible	4	35
10	Job adverts and organisation-wide marketing includes disabled people	12	63
11	Staff resources are accessible	11	60

Aim	Policies & Plans	Section	Page
12	Policy on adjustments for interviews and work	3.6 & 6 & 9	29, 40 & 51
13	Policy on equality and inclusion of disabled employees	3.6	29
14	The organisation is part of a scheme/s: Disability Confident Employer	3.9	33
15	Strategic and operation plans include enhancing access and inclusion of disabled people	3.5	27
16	Data monitoring system and policy in place	3.7 & 16	32 & 82

Section 1 References

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 www.gov.uk/recruitment-disabled-people/reasonable-adjustments</p> <p>2 https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers</p> | <p>3 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/11/chapter/2</p> <p>4 https://employersdirect.org.uk/</p> |
|--|---|

The business case for more disabled people in the workforce



Having more disabled people in the workforce can help you evolve as an organisation and reach more customers in a largely untapped and growing market. The following statistics help to explain the current landscape.

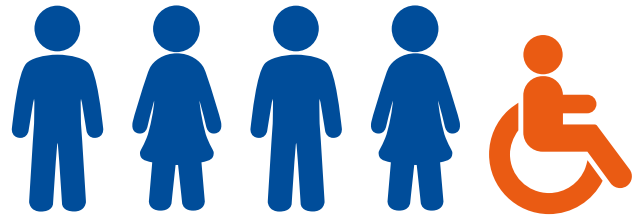
2.1 Background statistics

The 20+% rule of equal representation

Disabled people are under-represented across all aspects of the leisure industry. They are less likely to use facilities or work in the sector. Disabled people are rarely shown as fitness industry professionals in images and there is little reference to disabled people in mainstream marketing materials.

Disabled people make up over 20% of the UK population (more than one in five).⁵ A simple way to consider whether disabled people are being equally represented in your organisation, is to see if that percentage is reflected in your data. For example, are 20% of staff, managers and board members disabled? Is at least one in five of your marketing images a disabled person? Do disabled people make up 20% of your customer base?

The proportion of disabled people is also set to rise in the future, and is estimated at 25% by 2025. This is due to an ageing population and increased life expectancy.⁶



1 in 5 people

in the UK are disabled

The employment gap

The overall employment rates of disabled people are 30% lower than their non-disabled peers.⁷

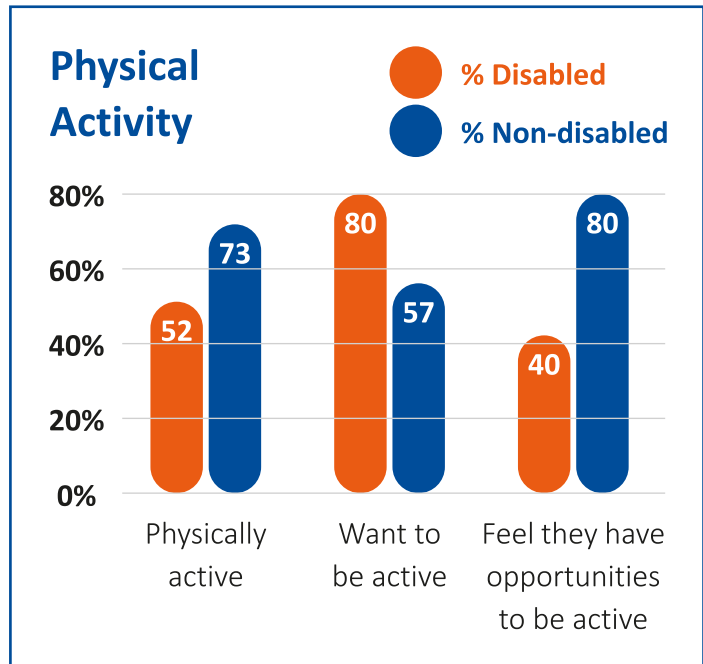
Many leisure operators do not collect monitoring information on disability in the workforce. Nonetheless, despite a lack of national data, there are clear indications that disabled people are vastly under-represented in the fitness and leisure sector workforce.⁸

The workforce skills gap

The majority (86%) of leisure operators think that most exercise professionals are not adequately trained to work with disabled customers.⁹ Mainstream activity providers have low levels of experience and confidence in delivering activity for disabled people and the idea of providing inclusive activity is something many have not even considered.¹⁰

The activity gap

Disabled people also participate less in sport and physical activity compared to non-disabled people and are twice as likely to be physically inactive.¹¹ However, over 20% more disabled people (compared to non-disabled people) have stated that they want to be physically active.¹² Despite appearing more motivated to be active, disabled people are 30% less likely to feel they are given the opportunity to be as active as they would like to be, compared to non-disabled people.¹³



2.2 The opportunities for business

Beyond a moral obligation to address the imbalance between disabled and non-disabled people in the leisure sector, enhancing service for disabled customers and workplace practices for disabled employees, can elicit real gains for organisations.



A workforce talent pool

Disabled people represent a talent pool of potential staff, who can bring a unique perspective to the workforce. This can benefit customers, staff and the organisation. For example, disabled staff could:

✓ Help you widen your customer base. The inclusive employment practices at Aspire Leisure Centre demonstrate that disabled people who are involved in the delivery of fitness and leisure services can attract more disabled people as customers.¹⁴

- ✓ Apply their enthusiasm and passion to the role because they may have personally experienced the impact of exercise on their own physical and mental well-being.
- ✓ Draw upon their experience of physical and social barriers to improve access to leisure for all customers.
- ✓ Provide role models for people who don't think that the leisure facility or exercise is for them.
- ✓ Contribute skills as an expert by experience (**explained on Page 15**).

If you want to get disabled customers into your facility, you've got to start looking at your staff base. If you employ disabled staff and have equality within service delivery, you are going to achieve equality within service use.

Chief Executive Officer

We found the more disabled people that we employed, the more disabled customers we got. It's like if you had a gym that only had male instructors, how are females going to feel about coming to that gym? So, you make sure you've got a good mix of male and female, so why not try and make sure that your staff range includes disabled and older people?

Head of Sales

Leisure sector employees usually fit such a narrow mould, a narrow demographic. We are changing that with our organisation, and I am gradually seeing the impact in our customer demographic.

Chief Executive Officer

I am convinced that without our disabled staff member and the journey we've been through, we wouldn't have as many disabled and mixed ability clients that we do, without a shadow of a doubt.

Fitness Centre Director

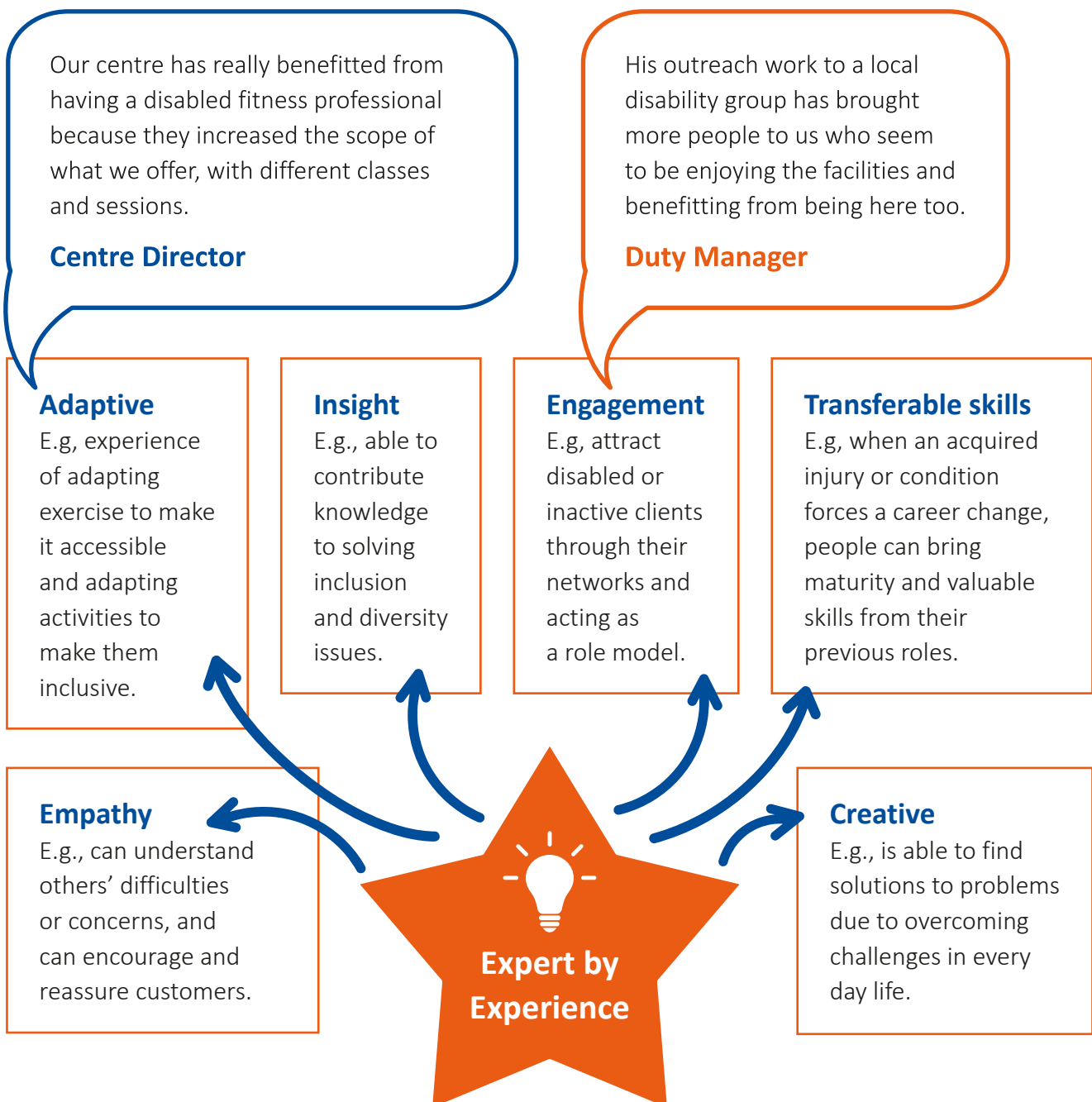
Diversity is key. I loved the gym but I didn't want to go there because it was awkward, like, intimidating and everyone looked the same. I really hope that if other disabled people see me working here, then they will want to come more.

Disabled fitness professional

An expert by experience

An expert by experience is someone with first-hand lived experience of disability. As well as being able to use their knowledge and perspective of disability, disabled people often develop certain skill sets due to their personal circumstances. Experts by experience can be uniquely placed to help plan and develop

accessible and inclusive facilities, policies and services. Consider some of the expertise that a disabled person might bring to an organisation due to their experience of exercise and using leisure facilities, or through overcoming challenges in their daily life. See an example of this in the case study in **Section 16**.



Different roles

In addition to delivering activities, disabled people working in different roles and at different levels across an organisation may be able to bring their expertise to enhancing access and inclusion in other areas, such as:

1. Frontline reception and services staff to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.
2. Recruitment/Human Resources staff to ensure job advertising is inclusive, and that interview and induction processes are accessible.
3. Training and development staff to upskill the workforce in disability awareness.
4. Marketing and communication staff to create accessible and inclusive resources.



A growing customer base

Disabled people present leisure operators with an untapped and growing market, with an increasing demand for accessible and inclusive activities. The reach goes beyond disabled individuals, with at least one in four households being connected to a disabled person, usually

a family member. The spending power of disabled people and their households continues to increase and is currently estimated to be worth £249 billion per year to UK business. Increasing this customer base may also expand the use of facilities at typically less busy periods, such as during the day, when some disabled people or groups may have the time to visit.

Disabled people have money to spend and they are a loyal customer base. If you make them feel welcome and comfortable in your facility they're going to keep returning. Retaining members is easier and cheaper than trying to recruit new members all the time.

Operations Manager

Mid-daytime is typically when gyms are quietest, but we have a disabled fitness professional working then, and disabled customers come in, not all of them are working and they've got that time, and they avoid rush hour travel, so it's a great match. It brings in revenue when our facilities are not used so much, and it also drives our secondary sales in the café.

Centre Director

I know a disabled person who has got his own business, he's very rich and he wants to continue to go to a club where he can socialise with people of that demographic. He said, 'I want to pay for spa facilities and towels that you get at reception. I still want that post-injury the same as I did pre-injury. I haven't changed as a person but now I can't access the top floor of the facility'.

Chief Executive Officer

There is a big business case for welcoming disabled people into your leisure facility. There does tend to be a perception that if you're disabled you don't have money but they do have money to spend, particularly on health and well-being.

Director of Operations

The benefits of an inclusive workplace culture

An organisation is more likely to succeed in recruiting and retaining disabled and non-disabled staff if there is an inclusive ethos where everyone feels welcome and valued. **Section 3** of the Guide has more information about how to do this. Consider how creating an inclusive workplace culture can positively impact on your business.



Help everyone feel **more relaxed about disability** by having more disabled people visible and commonplace within your organisation.



Improve productivity with a workforce that uses creative thinking and flexibility to meet new challenges.



Increase staff happiness by making them feel included, valued and empowered through an inclusive workplace culture.

When a customer comes into the centre and they see a disabled person, whatever their impairment is, it's just normal here now. It's the same with our staff, seeing a disabled member of staff is just normal.

Director of Operations

Do employees feel that they work for an organisation that genuinely cares about its customers and about society? Having disabled people as part of your workforce will promote that.

Duty Manager



Retain existing staff who acquire an impairment through injury or a health condition. 83% of people who have a disability, acquire it while they are in work. Some 400,000 people leave the workforce after developing a disability or work-limiting condition each year.¹⁵



Make use of **additional knowledge and skills** disabled people might have (e.g., British Sign Language, use of alternative technologies).



Have more opportunities to **test that inclusive policies work in 'real life'** for staff and customers.



Improve everyone's **understanding of individual differences** by encouraging conversations and sharing knowledge about disability and disabled people.

We shouldn't do the equality and diversity thing just because we should, but because we'd be missing out on employing people who can bring something to our company.

Human Resources Manager



Boost your **reputation for social responsibility** in the local community and across the sector.



Be more readily prepared to **meet contractual or legislative requirements**, related to equality and diversity by consulting with disabled staff to inform and review disability-related policy and practice.

Section 2 References

- 5 www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08
- 6 [www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(17\)30091-9/fulltext?elsca1=tlpr](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(17)30091-9/fulltext?elsca1=tlpr)
- 7 <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7540>
- 8 www.futurefit.co.uk/uploads/documents/raising-the-bar/2018/FFT_Raising_The_Bar_2018.pdf
- 9 www.futurefit.co.uk/uploads/documents/raising-the-bar/2018/FFT_Raising_The_Bar_2018.pdf
- 10 www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/4730-delivering-activity-to-disabled-people-the-workforce-perception-gap
- 11 www.sportengland.org/research/active-lives-survey/
- 12 www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/annual-survey
- 13 www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/annual-survey
- 14 www.instructability.org.uk/
- 15 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmworpen/56/56.pdf>

Part B

Advice and Recommendations



Becoming an inclusive organisation



The main purpose of this Guide is to help employers increase the number of disabled people in their workforce.

To succeed in this, you will need to become a credible inclusive organisation, that has a strategy for inclusion across every aspect of your operations. This wider approach will result in more disabled people being represented in your workforce, customer base and other stakeholder groups.

The advice in this section addresses key priorities for becoming an inclusive organisation.

3.1 Start with an inclusive perspective

To really embed an inclusive ethos across the organisation, try helping all staff to understand and embrace this approach. Some quick tips to get you started are below. For more substantial details on each point and disability awareness training go to **Part C: More Information**.

Inclusion is about making disabled people feel like they belong and are valued. An employer that offers equal opportunity may still not succeed in attracting disabled job applicants if they perceive that they will not be fully welcomed or supported (**see Section 13**).

The social model of disability underpins an ethos of inclusion. The model focuses on the systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) that mean society is the main contributory factor in disabling people. The onus is therefore upon society (organisations and individuals) to remove these barriers so disabled people can be included (**see Section 14**).

A simple way to explain and remind people of this perspective is to use this practical example.



- Q.** Look at the picture above and ask ‘what is disabling the person and preventing them from getting to the leisure centre?’
- A.** Using the social model when answering the question, we would say the stairs are the problem and we can fix this by providing a ramp.

When working through this Guide, apply the social model example to review and address any ways in which policies, practices and behaviours may be 'disabling' someone with an impairment.

Language has also evolved to reflect the change in our view of disability and align to the social model of disability. We recommend that any inclusive organisation adopts and promotes an appropriate language policy (see Section 15).

3.2 Address concerns

There may be a range of reasons why disabled people are underrepresented in your organisation and this Guide aims to address these. However, our research also revealed that sometimes barriers exist because employers have a negative mindset about employing

disabled people. This may arise from an unconscious bias, which occurs when you have thoughts that are based on stereotypes and prejudices that you may not even realise you have. Holding prejudice views is a form of discrimination and so it is important that any such concerns from people within your organisation are addressed as part of your inclusion policy.

It is easy to base decisions and behaviour on these unconscious thoughts. If you have a concern about employing a disabled person, make sure you consider the potential issues fully and your thoughts are based on sound evidence and not on a preconceived idea.

The following pages show some of the concerns employers say they have, along with the factual responses.



Some employer concerns

We cannot cater for every single impairment as there are so many different needs, it's a minefield.

Our other customers or staff may feel uncomfortable in the presence of disabled customers and staff.

Disabled employees will need more training.

Disabled employees might need more time off or last-minute changes to shifts.

Some answers

Many disabled people do not want or need any additional adjustments to be able to do their job. When impairment-specific adjustments are required, many disabled people already have the technology, equipment and/or personal support in place.

When disabled and non-disabled people regularly work or participate in activities together, both parties feel at ease. People might feel uncomfortable if they lack experience, so creating an inclusive environment should help all people overcome any negative feelings.

All leisure professionals should have the same recognised qualifications, preferably endorsed by CIMSPA, and will have comparable knowledge and skills.

Disabled workers sometimes experience a higher rate of sickness absence, although this group has also shown the greatest reduction in sickness absence in recent years. The sickness is not necessarily related to an impairment or condition. With reasonable adjustments in place disabled people are not likely to require last minute changes to working patterns.¹⁶

“ She is hard-working, creative, and fun for the customers. Her personality is what everyone sees and loves, no one cares about her impairment. She fits in great. ”

Fitness Services Manager

Some employer concerns

It can be difficult and expensive to provide adjustments for disabled employees.

Disabled employees can't do some jobs.

There are likely to be many health and safety risks for a disabled person to be working in a gym.

Some answers

Many adjustments are inexpensive and simple to implement such as rearranging equipment to provide better access or allowing extra breaks. Funding is also available from the government's **Access to Work** ¹⁷ scheme.

If adaptations are made when required, most disabled employees can effectively apply their skills and experience to the job role.

There is no **health and safety legislation** ¹⁸ that would prevent a disabled person being employed. Any additional risks should be managed through making adjustments where required.

“ Some of our disabled staff have been off sick but another disabled staff member has worked here for years and he is never sick, he has probably had about one week off in all that time. ”

Director of Operations

“ We need all leisure operators to say, 'Okay, yeah, we might face some challenges along the way, there is maybe a lack of confidence or there's a nervousness around employing disabled people but we've got to change that somehow.' I think that people have got to be willing to give things a go and learn. We are learning too. ”

Disabled Fitness Professional

“ Yes there's some classes I can't teach, but I can do most other things required of a fitness professional and so can many others in the same position. We just sometimes need to do things in a slightly different way, but we can do the job and customers don't get a worse experience because of this. ”

Disabled Fitness Professional

3.3 Train staff

Educating all staff about disability will increase their understanding and confidence when adopting inclusive practices in the workplace or in their service delivery for disabled customers.

A top-down approach is recommended, by upskilling senior staff first, so they can effectively lead others. Consider how you can train existing staff and build training into an induction for any new staff. Launching a new drive to become an inclusive organisation provides a great platform to engage all staff members, include them in discussions and enable them to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Providing information via written documents or e-learning will be useful but may not fully prepare people for applying their knowledge in real life situations. Addressing the inclusion of disabled people across all action plans, will enable staff to practically apply what they learn in training. Providing discussion groups and workshops is also likely to further embed understanding.

Consider how you might make use of the resources and training opportunities below:

Resources

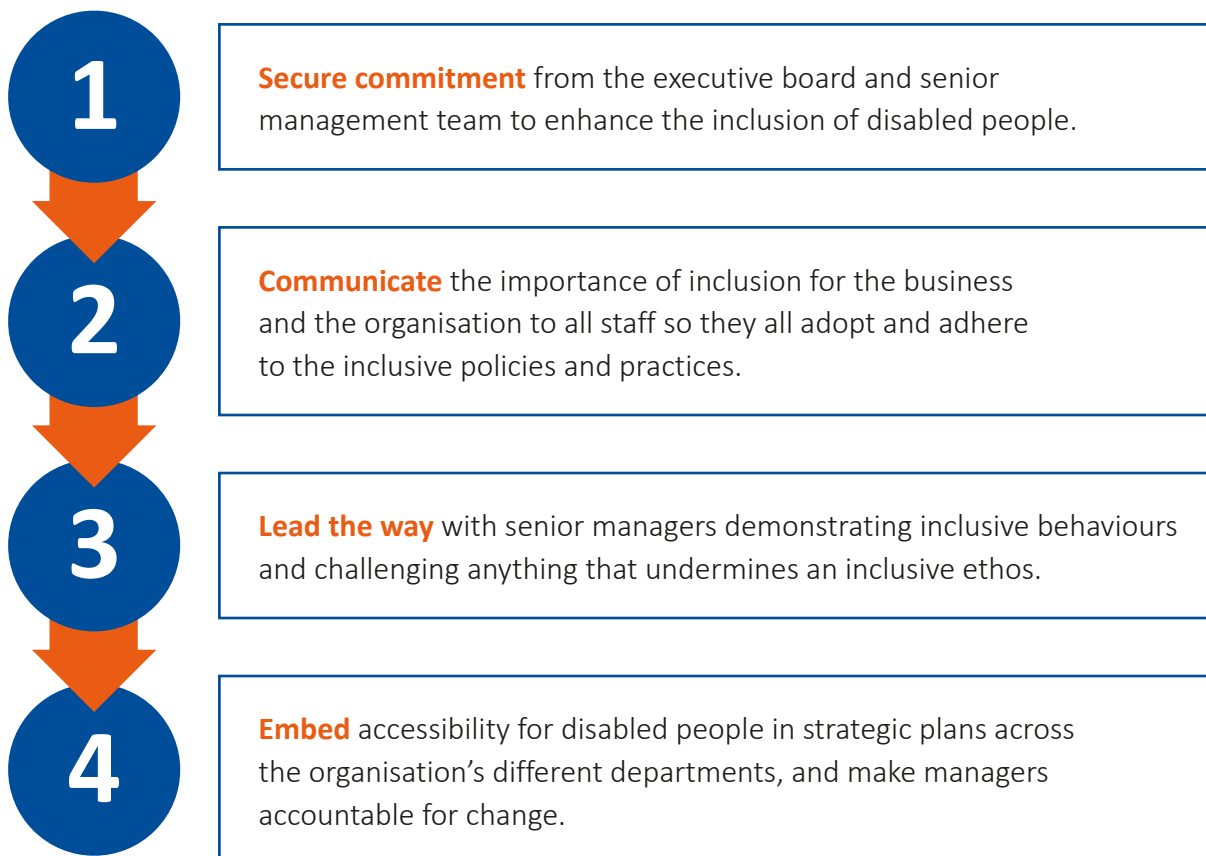
- Circulate this Guide to all staff, highlight specific areas to relevant departments and use Part C for general disability information.
- Activity Alliance Communications Guide. ¹⁹
- Activity Alliance 'Talk to me principles'. ²⁰
- Bridging the Gap Communications Guide. ²¹

- Government Inclusive Communication. ²²
- Scope 'Let's talk: improving conversations about disability at work'. ²³
- For more information on specific impairments or conditions look at national organisations e.g.,
 - Mencap (for learning difficulties) ²⁴
 - Mind (for mental health issues) ²⁵
 - British Deaf Association ²⁶
 - Royal National Institute of Blind People ²⁷

Delivery

- Senior managers can present the organisation's Inclusion Strategy to the whole workforce.
- Department leaders can discuss access and inclusion at team meetings.
- All staff can access online disability awareness training, a free version is available at Disability Matters. ²⁸
- Disability organisations can deliver training at your centre or you can book staff onto courses e.g.,
 - Disability Rights UK ²⁹
 - Activity Alliance ³⁰
 - Inclusive Employers ³¹
 - Business Disability Forum ³²
- Employees can observe good-practice by engaging with other organisations inside and outside of the sector, including those with 'Disability Confident Leader' status. ³³

3.4 Use a top-down approach



“ To really change things, I think it starts with their management and their staff, do they truly embrace it or is it just a tick box exercise? ”

Disabled employee



3.5 Strategically plan

Embedding your commitment to access and inclusion in your strategic plans, will provide a framework for integrating the work across the organisation. Once the aims feature in all relevant plans and impact measurements, it will become easier to review progress and evaluate your success as an inclusive organisation.



3.6 Review statements and policies

Review your statements on equality, diversity and inclusion. Consider going beyond the basic statement about complying with the Equality Act. Have a separate statement and policy that is specifically designed for the workforce, which can be included in recruitment information.

3.6.1 Create a powerful statement

- Apply the rules of 'Plain English'. Keep it short with only 20-80 words and use simple words and short sentences.
- Use a headline more specific than, 'diversity statement' to give greater meaning.
- Be clear and detailed, and use positive words and an authentic voice to gain greater trust from prospective employees.

Our customers come from all walks of life and so do we.

We hire great people from a wide variety of backgrounds, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it makes our company stronger. If you share our values and our enthusiasm for small businesses, you will find a home at Gusto.

Gusto

Different together.

At Apple, we're not all the same.

And that's our greatest strength. We draw on the differences in who we are, what we've experienced, and how we think. Because to create products that serve everyone, we believe in including everyone.

Apple

Unleashing the power of diversity.

Fostering a place where everyone can connect, belong, and grow.

At Deloitte, each of us contributes to inclusion - we all have a role to play. Our culture is the result of our behaviours, our personal commitment, our curiosity, how we collaborate, and the ways that we courageously share our perspectives and encourage others to do the same.

In turn, our inclusive culture inspires us to try new things, speak openly, and be bold. It brings us together in ways that help us stand out. Our inclusive culture empowers all of us to connect, belong, and grow.

Deloitte

3.6.2 Include a specific statement and policy about disability and employment

■ Example:

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people. We seek to address the under representation of disabled people in the leisure sector workforce and we value the skills and experience disabled people can bring to a variety of roles within our organisation.

We are committed to improving access and inclusion for disabled employees and work to remove any barriers.

We will:

- a. Guarantee an interview for any disabled applicant that meets the essential criteria for the job.
- b. Provide job application information in accessible formats.
- c. Discuss and implement any reasonable adjustments required during the recruitment process.
- d. Focus on what people can do.
- e. Consider adaptations to job roles if required.
- f. Ensure recruitment staff are trained in disability awareness and Equality Act legislation.
- g. Make every effort to keep staff in employment if they become disabled.
- h. Regularly review any support or adjustments needs whilst in employment.
- i. Monitor and report the recruitment and promotion of disabled people within our organisation.

3.6.3 Give examples of your work on inclusion and diversity to demonstrate your credibility.

- Include information about any campaigns, partnerships with disability organisations, case studies of disabled employees and customers and diversity monitoring data.

3.6.4 Create a Disability Inclusion Policy and update existing policies

Staff absence

Review your policy on staff absence and consider distinguishing between time off for being ill and time off related to disability. The latter can be regarded as ‘disability leave’ and recorded separately to ‘sick leave’. This action would be considered a reasonable adjustment. See further guidance from:

- TUC ³⁴
- Unison ³⁵

Reasonable adjustments

Have a reasonable adjustment policy that includes the following:

- The procedure for requesting an adjustment.
- Alternative accessible formats available for making the request.

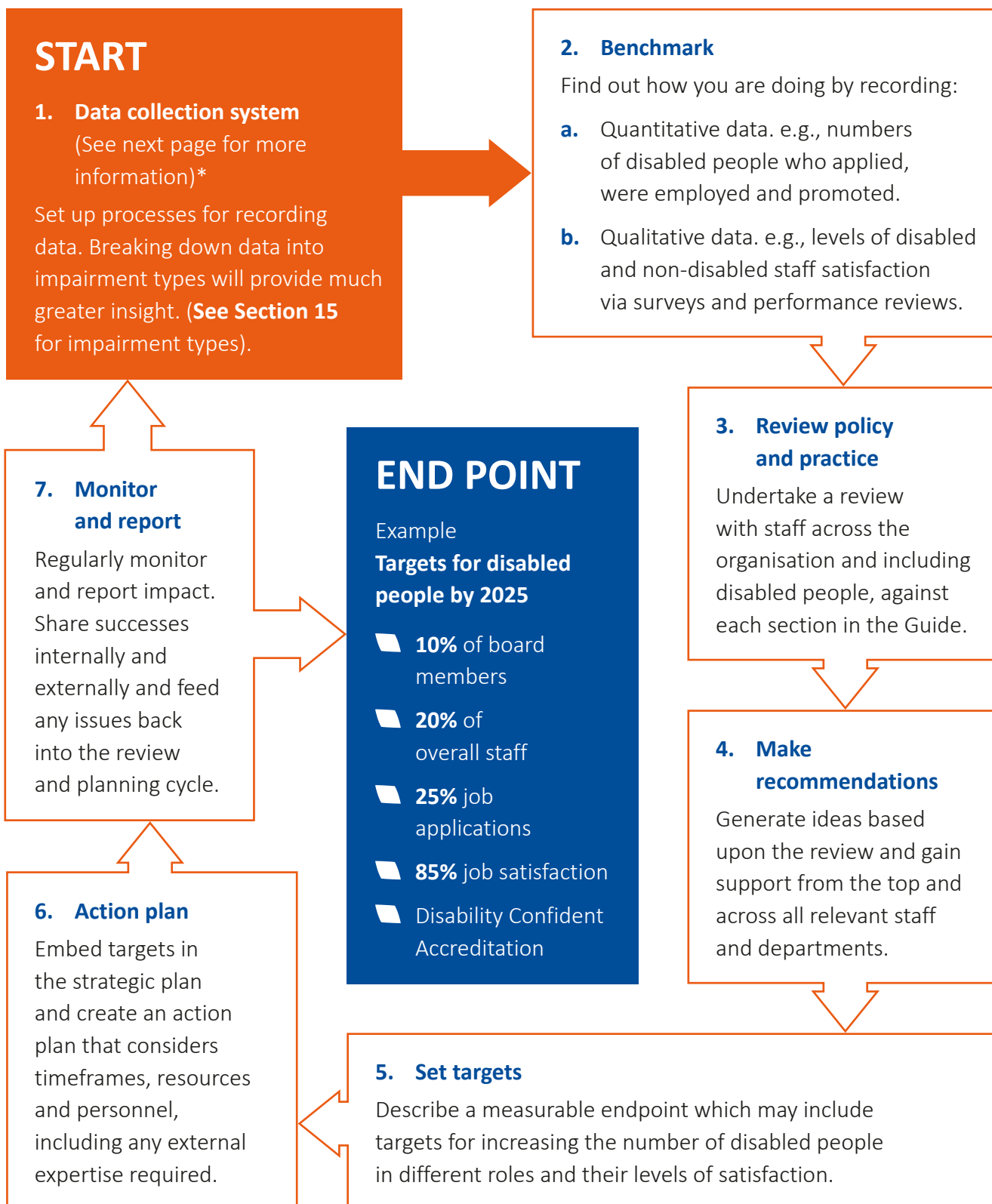
- How the confidential information is recorded, viewed, processed and stored.
- Any criteria that is involved in the decision-making process.
- How and when the decision will be communicated.
- Appeal processes if a request is denied.
- Regular review of adjustments made and future needs.
- Staff training to ensure they understand the policy, can accommodate requests and feel confident in managing staff who work in different ways.

See an example of a, ‘request and decision process form’ on the [Business Disability Forum website](#). ³⁶

You can use the information in other parts of this Guide to create or update other staff policies that cover:

- Staff training.
- Flexible working.
- Accessible and inclusive resources and technology.
- Disability language and etiquette.
- Inclusive behaviours.
- Diversity monitoring.

3.7 Understand your start and end points



***Notes on collecting data:**

- Collect data at application, interview, and induction stages, and as an ongoing process.
- Use confidential systems and emphasise data protection and privacy.
- Ensure processes are accessible and available in alternative confidential formats.
- Explain the reason for collecting data and how it will be stored and used.
- Include a 'prefer not to say' option.

3.8 Consult with disabled people

Consider inviting disabled people to contribute to discussion groups about improving access and inclusion in the workforce.

For example:

- Set up a task force to increase the number of disabled people working in the organisation. Invite any current disabled employees to speak about their experiences in the organisation and in their job role.
- Build links with disabled employees and managers from other businesses to discuss their approach and share their experiences.
- Include disabled people in all aspects of your planning to help you create inclusive policies and plans.

- Liaise with other stakeholders such as national and local disability organisations that could provide advice on engaging and communicating with disabled people to attract them into the workforce.

3.9 Gain accreditation

Working towards some form of accreditation can provide you with a structure and clear goals. It is also a good way to demonstrate your public commitment to access and inclusion for disabled people.

Disability Confident Employer

Consider joining the [Government's Disability Confident Scheme](#) ³⁷

The scheme is relevant for employers across all industries and is designed to help organisations recruit and retain disabled employees. If you implement the advice in this Guide for leisure sector employees, you will already be well on your way to achieving 'Disability Confident' status and may not require much additional work to gain the accreditation.

There are three levels of accreditation, each with a different level of commitment.

- Level 1: Disability Confident Committed ³⁸
- Level 2: Disability Confident Employer ³⁹
- Level 3: Disability Confident Leader ⁴⁰

There is a list of existing Disability Confident organisations that offer a [support service](#) ⁴¹ to help others achieve these standards.

View [Remploy's good practice guide](#) ⁴² for some useful information about getting started.

Further information for managers about being Disability Confident, and recruiting, managing and developing people with an impairment or health condition can be found in the [Government-created guide](#).⁴³

The Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI)

The Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) covers a wide range of access and inclusion issues for disabled people in the leisure setting.

Accreditation is awarded by Quest, the UK Quality Scheme for Sport and Leisure, and is achieved through completing Module [GPLus37](#)⁴⁴ 'Engaging with Disabled people and People with Long Term Health Conditions'.

Mindful Employer®

[Mindful Employer](#)⁴⁵ offers employers the opportunity to become a signatory to the Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health.

Section 3 References

- 16 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/sicknessabsenceinthelabourmarket/2018>
- 17 <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- 18 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/disability/employers.htm>
- 19 [http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/000/020/EFDS_Inclusive_comms_guide_accessible_PDF_APRIL_2014_FINAL\(1\)_original.pdf?1456915910](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/000/020/EFDS_Inclusive_comms_guide_accessible_PDF_APRIL_2014_FINAL(1)_original.pdf?1456915910)
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- 21 https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/BtG_Inclusive-and-accessible-Communication-Guidelines.pdf
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- 28 www.disabilitymatters.org.uk
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- 30 <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/training>
- 31 <https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk>
- 32 <https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/our-services/learning-and-development/>
- 33 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up>
- 34 https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tucfiles/sickness_absence_and_disability_discrimination_feb2013.pdf
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- 36 <https://members.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/resource-category/resource/accessible-technology-charter-reasonable-adjustment/>
- 37 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>
- 38 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme#level-1-disability-confident-committed>
- 39 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme#level-2-disability-confident-employer>
- 40 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme#level-3-disability-confident-leader>
- 41 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-service-providers>
- 42 https://www.remploy.co.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/Disability%20confident/Level_1_Your_journey_to_becoming_Disability_Confident_Committed_Good_Practice_Guidance.pdf
- 43 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-and-cipd-guide-for-line-managers-on-employing-people-with-a-disability-or-health-condition/guide-for-line-managers-recruiting-managing-and-developing-people-with-a-disability-or-health-condition>
- 44 <https://questnbs.org/module-guidance>
- 45 <http://www.mindfulemployer.net>



Reaching disabled people

You can take positive action to reach more disabled people when you are advertising jobs or generally promoting career opportunities in your organisation. If you are a member of the Disability Confident scheme, you can use this logo on your advertising to signal that you encourage applications from disabled people. You can also include your statement and policy as discussed in [Section 3.6](#).

Apply the guidance in later sections to ensure the information you provide is inclusive of, and accessible to, disabled people.

Events to engage prospective employees

- Host an open event, where job seekers are invited to look around the facilities, and speak to managers and current employees about job opportunities.
- Establish links with mainstream schools and appropriate special schools to provide career advice.
- Exhibit at career events which may be generic, sector-specific or disability-related. For example:
 - World Skills UK LIVE ⁴⁶, which is a skills, careers and apprenticeships event.
 - The National Career Guidance Show. ⁴⁷
 - Diversity Career Show. ⁴⁸

- For any events that are hosted or attended, promote your event activity via your social media channels.

Advertising channels

Most organisations advertise their courses using the same channels, such as the mainstream leisure publications. If you are not attracting many disabled people through your existing channels, consider the ideas below. In addition to targeting disabled people directly, you might also be able to reach them through others that represent or support them. For example, parents, carers, teachers, healthcare professionals and career advisors.

Own website and social media

Ensure that information is available in accessible formats so that disabled people can retrieve and understand the content ([see Section 12](#)).

Jobcentre Plus ⁴⁹

Contact your local JCP if your organisation has jobs available in a specific area, or more widely if you are a national organisation. Ensure that work coaches and disability employment advisors at the Jobcentre are aware that you encourage applications from disabled people.

National Careers Service ⁵⁰

Make advisors aware of your current job vacancies so they can signpost potential employees.

Disability employment platforms

Consider posting jobs on sites that support disabled people looking for employment.

- British Association for Supported Employment (BASES). ⁵¹
- Disability Rights UK. ⁵²
- Remploy. ⁵³
- MyPlus Students' Club. ⁵⁴ This organisation also hosts career events. ⁵⁵
- Vercida. ⁵⁶
- Evenbreak. ⁵⁷

Target people who are already involved in physical activity through organisations such as: Activity Alliance ⁵⁸ and Parasport. ⁵⁹

Disability websites and publications with employment sections

- Disability Horizons. ⁶⁰
- Enable. ⁶¹
- Pos'ability. ⁶²
- Able magazine. ⁶³
- All Together NOW! ⁶⁴

Radio

Consider targeting the following stations and programmes as part of your advertising strategy.

- Insight Radio. ⁶⁵ The Royal National Institute of Blind People radio station, is an example of a station produced specifically for those with visual impairments.

- You and Yours. ⁶⁶ A Radio 4 programme which has a high proportion of stories targeted at disabled listeners.
- See Hear. ⁶⁷ A BBC TV programme which is an alternative to radio for people with hearing impairments. It is presented in sign language with open subtitles.
- Many local hospitals also have their own radio station.

Local community

- Community centres and sports clubs (particularly ones that deliver disability or inclusive activities).
- Council leisure services.
- Local disability organisations and charities.
- Disability sports clubs & associations. Disability sports clubs and events can be found at Scope ⁶⁸ and Parasport. ⁶⁹





Section 4 References

- 46 www.worldskillsuk.org/directions/our-events/worldskills-uk-live
- 47 <https://prospectsevents.co.uk>
- 48 www.diversitycareers.info/careers-show
- 49 <https://www.gov.uk/advertise-job>
- 50 <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>
- 51 www.base-uk.org
- 52 www.disabilityrightsuk.org/about-us
- 53 www.remploy.co.uk/about-us
- 54 www.mylusstudentsclub.com
- 55 www.mylusstudentsclub.com/events
- 56 www.vercida.com/uk
- 57 www.evenbreak.co.uk
- 58 <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/get-involved/jobs-in-sport>
- 59 <https://parasport.org.uk>
- 60 www.disabilityhorizons.com
- 61 enablemagazine.co.uk
- 62 www.posabilitymagazine.co.uk
- 63 ablemagazine.co.uk/articles/work-education
- 64 www.alltogethernow.org.uk/about-us
- 65 <https://www.radio-uk.co.uk/insight-radio>
- 66 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qps9>
- 67 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006m9cb>
- 68 <http://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/disability-sport>
- 69 <https://www.parasport.org.uk>

Job seeker information and support



Some disabled people seek out particular information when exploring job opportunities. You probably already have the details, but consider how easily available information is on your website, in job adverts and application packs. Detailed information can help disabled people assess whether they would be suited to the role and what adjustments might need to be considered before they apply. The information is likely to be helpful to all prospective job applicants.

Below are questions that disabled people told us they want to know the answers to.

1. What is the specific role requirements, including fixed and flexible duties?
2. What are the hours, days and working patterns, and are these fixed or flexible?
3. How accessible are the main workplace locations and facilities?
4. Does the role require travel to other locations, or to undertake work off site?
5. Is there a probation period, and if so, what does an employee needs to demonstrate within this timeframe?
6. What compulsory and optional training is available, how is it delivered and when can they be accessed?
7. What is the policy on staff absence? What provision is available for employees who may need to take a leave of absence related to disability, such as an appointment or treatment? What implications might this have for completing a probation period or placement, their salary and access to training opportunities?
8. What are the job application and selection processes?
9. What are your policies on equality, diversity and inclusion and making reasonable adjustments?

Answering queries about the job role

A disabled person may welcome the opportunity to discuss the role before applying. Depending on your organisation, this first point of contact might be a line manager for the position, or a member of the human resources or recruitment team (herein called an advisor). This guidance also applies to any outsourced recruitment agency.

You can increase accessibility for disabled people by giving a specific name and contact details for an advisor. Also provide a range of enquiry options to include:

- Direct telephone (avoid phone numbers that go via switchboard or reception desk).
- Named email (avoid generic department email addresses).
- Web-based communication channels such as an online chat/message portal, or Skype.
- Face-to-face meeting.

As this can be an important first point of contact, it is worth considering how well equipped advisors are to handle enquiries. For example, they should be able to:

- Check with management or human resources if they are unsure about what reasonable adjustments might be available to support the candidate. It is important the advisor does not make assumptions without fully considering all options.
- Advise a disabled applicant if their impairment will prevent them undertaking certain elements of the job role, and discuss flexible ways of working, and alternative duties that they are able to complete. See guidance about **job carving in Section 9**.

These recommendations will also support non-disabled candidates to decide whether the role is right for them, such as those who are new or returning to work, or those who may feel anxious about taking on a new challenge.

Offer visits to prospective applicants

Be ready to offer potential disabled applicants the opportunity to visit the venue and receive a tour of the facilities. This might help them to:

- Meet an advisor face to face to discuss and ask questions about the job role.
- Provide accessible application documentation, for example, a job description, person specification and application form (**see Section 6**).
- Assess whether the work environment is physically accessible to them.
- See first-hand if any reasonable adjustments might be necessary if they are deemed to be the successful candidate.

A visit is also a good opportunity for a candidate to see and meet their potential colleagues and customers, which allows individuals to familiarise themselves with places and people. This may be valuable to raise the confidence of a candidate with a mental health, anxiety-related, or autism-spectrum impairment, so that they feel more comfortable about who they may potentially be working with, and where. These visits and conversations can also help a candidate prepare a good quality application because they will have some first-hand experience of the organisation and workplace.



Application and selection

It is important that application and selection procedures are made fair and accessible for all candidates, and that disabled people are not substantially disadvantaged during these stages. Consider how you structure the process and make sure you include this information in the job information pack for prospective candidates before they apply.

6.1 Person specification

- **Only include essential criteria where necessary** to avoid unnecessary barriers for disabled people. For example, a gym instructor role:
 - Level 2 CIMSPA gym instructor qualification.
 - The ability to empathise and work with clients of all abilities.
 - A friendly and approachable personality.
- **Consider positive action.** For example, if your organisation has a target to increase disabled customers but lacks expertise in the existing workforce you might want to include knowledge and/or experience of disability issues and exercise as an essential or desirable criterion for the role.
- **Do put a focus on transferable skills,** so disabled people can use their experience of adapting and problem solving in everyday life. For example, how they adapt using exercise equipment with limited hand grip. Another example may be someone transitioning out of the Army due to injury who can demonstrate competency in fitness and teamwork.
- **Don't put too much emphasis on previous experience.** This may disadvantage people who have found it difficult to access training or work in the sector due to barriers in the past, or if their impairment or condition has required a career change.
- **Consider guaranteed interviews** for any disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria, either through your own policy or as part of the Disability Confident Employer scheme ([see Section 3.9](#)).

6.2 Application process

- **Schedule enough time between application open and closing dates** to allow a disabled person to find out all the information they need, discuss the role and visit the centre if they wish.
- **Provide accessible and alternative formats for completing an application form** (e.g., via accessible websites or online forms, completing a hard paper copy and sending via post, applying over the telephone or submitting recorded audio/video responses or via a web-based channels such as Skype or Zoom).
- **Allow candidates to demonstrate their skills via video or testimonials.** This might help some people compensate for their lack of work experience or any assumptions made by recruiters. Do not make this compulsory though as it could also be a barrier for others.
- **Enable the candidate to share information about an impairment or health condition** via a confidential monitoring form. This monitoring form should be kept separate from the application and not viewed by anyone involved in the selection process. Disabled people are not required to give any information about an impairment during the selection process.
- **Enable a disabled person to inform you of any adjustments or support** needs they may require for a pre-selection test or interview.

- **Ask applicants to give details of their preferred contact method.** Use the preferred method for any further communications if possible.
- **If a disabled applicant is shortlisted, follow up** to ensure you have all the required information and fully understand any support or adjustment they require for the next stage of selection.
- **If a disabled person is rejected, tailored rejection letters** should be sent to candidates, explaining why they did not meet the requirements and encouraging them to apply for other positions in future.
- **If a candidate declines a job offer, ask for feedback.** It may be that they didn't feel comfortable or confident that adjustments will be made. This feedback will help you understand if there are any issues that need to be addressed regarding the organisation's culture or systems.



6.3 Selection tasks and interviews

Aim to make any pre-employment selection assessments or interviews accessible for all candidates, rather than having to adjust for specific individuals. Host interviews at accessible venues whether you expect disabled applicants to apply or not. You will also see the best from all candidates if you can create a relaxed, comfortable environment and reduce any stress or anxiety.

Consider the following:

Environment

- Ensure there is accessible parking available near to the interview location.
- Consider the journey and whether the candidate would benefit from a later start or if possible the offer of an overnight stay before the interview.
- Inform security and reception staff if they need to be aware of the disabled candidate's requirements.
- Conduct the assessment or interview in a quiet environment.
- Locate activities on the ground floor, or with a lift and accessible toilets if on another floor.

- Ensure there is adequate space, clear of obstacles, for wheelchair users or visually impaired people to safely navigate the room.
- If the process takes a long time, ensure there are suitable rest breaks.
- If a candidate needs to take longer than others to complete a task or move around the building, ensure they don't miss having a break.

Reasonable adjustments for tasks if required

- Communicator support (e.g., a British Sign Language interpreter, a scribe, or a guide).
- Extra time to complete any selection activities such as aptitude, proficiency tests or assessments.
- Extra time for interviews where candidates require communicator support or live with learning or cognitive impairments.
- Resources that are available in an accessible format.

Make candidates aware of common adjustments available prior to the interview. Also be aware that the applicant may not know what adjustments they need if they have not been fully informed about the test and interview procedures and requirements.

Interviews

- Include disabled people on interview panels, which may be an existing staff or board member, an ambassador or member of the community who sits on your disability forum group.
- Train interviewers in equality, diversity and inclusion, disability awareness and unconscious bias.
- Do not ask candidates about any impairments or health conditions unless it is necessary to understand their ability to do the job. It is up to the candidate if they wish to discuss it.
- Use a selection system that only assesses values, behaviours and competencies.
- Ask all candidates the same basic set of questions. Asking only disabled candidates about how they will do an aspect of the job may be discriminatory. For example, ask everyone to describe the process of how they would clean the gym equipment or do pool tests.

- Avoid seating interviewers formally behind a table with the candidate on the other side, as this can feel intimidating.
- Consider offering a work trial as part of the interview process. A trial can last an hour or a day and gives the candidate a chance to demonstrate their skills and suitability for the position.



Staff induction



Remember, not everyone will share information about their impairment or condition before they start a new role. They might need to feel confident in your organisation before they share such information. Also be aware that an impairment or health condition might be acquired by existing staff, or change over time. It is therefore important that everyone is aware of the policies and you continue to offer opportunities to all staff to record any changes to their disability status and subsequent support needs.

Consider the following points when welcoming a new disabled employee into the workforce:

- Make them aware of all staff policies that relate to disability (**see Section 3.6**).
- Ask them if and how they want to share details about their impairment with others. Some might prefer to keep it confidential, whilst others might feel more comfortable if other staff are informed.
- Discuss their impairment openly and encourage them to consider support options.
- Offer to assign a mentor or buddy. This could be a line manager, work mentor or peer who is well-placed to offer support and guidance and is also keen to develop themselves.

- Undertake a workplace and job role assessment to consider the need for any reasonable adjustments.
- If available, consider a review with an occupational health service with staff who are trained in disability and inclusion.
- Ensure adjustments support the employee to fulfil their roles and develop in areas that they want, rather than making them fit into roles that you assume they are suited to.
- Review and monitor employee needs on an ongoing basis, possibly as part of regular appraisals. Be aware that impairments may change over time requiring different support and adjustments as well as the advancement of new technology and equipment.

Access to Work

If an employee requires additional support after you have made reasonable adjustments, the individual may be able to get help from Access to Work. To be eligible, the disabled person needs to have a paid job, or be about to start or return to one. They will be offered support based on their needs, which may include a grant to help cover the costs of practical and / or mental health support in the workplace.

An 'Access to Work' grant can pay for:

- Adaptations to the equipment an employee needs to use.
- Special equipment or software.
- British Sign Language interpreters and video relay service support, lip speakers or note takers.
- Taxi fares to work or a support worker if they cannot use public transport.
- A support worker or job coach to assist them in the workplace.

It is important to note that an Access to Work grant application needs to be made by the individual, not the employer. This can be done online or by telephone. To find out more visit

[Access to Work.](#) 70



Workplace induction

Consider what is included in your induction process to support disabled employees who are just beginning in their roles.

The following will benefit all new employees but may be particularly important for employees with physical, visual, cognitive and mental health impairments.

- Send information, resources and forms to be completed in advance to anyone who might benefit from being able to prepare and digest content.
- Ensure induction materials are accessible. For example, video or online training is subtitled and all digital resources are compatible with screen reading software. **See Section 12** on accessible resources.
- Explain and check accessibility of any relevant sign-in and sign-out procedures.
- Explain and check accessibility of any procedures related to car park barriers, keys, swipe card access, door codes, and alarms.
- Discuss access considerations for guides, assistance dogs and support workers, so everyone can move independently around the facilities.
- Explain any relevant health and safety policies and procedures, including emergency evacuations and planned fire drills.

- Go through a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for any employee who may not be able to reach a final place of safety unaided or within a satisfactory period in the event of an emergency. PEEPs may be required for staff with mobility, hearing, visual, and/or cognitive impairments. Temporary PEEPs may also be required for an employee with a short-term injury or medical condition, or those in the later stages of pregnancy.
- Allow employees to explore and navigate their way around the building and the facilities, lifts, and rest and refreshment areas so they feel comfortable and can find their way around the venue easily and safely. Guide and describe the layout of these areas (plus fixed versus moveable equipment) to visually impaired employees, and ensure guides, assistance dogs and support workers have time to be familiar with the venue also.
- Show and check accessibility of staff amenities such as staff room, kitchen, toilets, changing facilities and lockers.
- Use the accessibility checklist for any induction training that takes place on site or at another venue (**see Section 8**).
- Undertake a role-specific induction, such as gym equipment and pool use.

Staff introductions

- Offer welcome meetings or introductory sessions to meet colleagues and managers. Provide introductory activities to allow new employees to get to know their colleagues and management.
- Discuss different job roles and what people are good at to highlight the different ways everyone makes a valuable contribution to the organisation.
- If a disabled person is keen to talk about their impairment to other staff, find out how they wish to communicate this and facilitate these opportunities.

Section 7 References

70 www.gov.uk/access-to-work



Making the workplace physically accessible



Assess each area of the workplace using the accessibility checklist below. Consider if there is a disabled employee who can either accompany you or be trained to carry out an internal audit. Alternatively, there are other organisations that provide this service.

General building accessibility

- Are accessible parking spaces available?
- Are external and internal doors automatic or easy to open?
- Are doors and corridors wide enough to accommodate wheelchair users, including turning areas?
- Are there ramps, handrails and functioning lifts?
- Does the centre have a contract in place with the lift company to ensure that repairs are carried out promptly?
- Is there a hearing loop installed?
- Is there an audio-visual fire alarm installed?
- Is there a policy for disabled staff to bring an assistance dog?
- Does the flooring throughout the centre allow for safe wheeling? For example, any small steps, raised areas, rucking in carpets or linoleum, and broken floor tiles can be problematic for wheelchair users and present trip hazards for everyone, especially individuals with a mobility or visual impairment.

Entry and exit of workplace

- Are security pin pads for external and internal building access at a suitable height for wheelchair users? Do they have tactile buttons for visually impaired people?
- Are sign-in and sign-out procedures positioned in an accessible space and accessible to people with visual impairments or who have limited hand function?

Office floor area

- Is the floor free from trip hazards such as cables from laptops and desktop computers, telephones, and other electronic equipment, that can pose a particular risk to those with mobility or visual impairments?
- Is the floor kept free from other employees' personal belongings such as bags and coats?
- Are changes in floor levels with steps or slopes, clearly identified and provided with handrails, ramps or lifts?

Furniture and equipment:

- Are there movable tables and chairs which are positioned to accommodate wheelchair users or those with mobility aids?
- Is furniture and equipment situated at a height that wheelchair users or someone of short stature can reach?
- Can wheelchair users access tables whilst in their wheelchair or transfer from their wheelchair into a chair? This will vary depending on personal preference, impairment type and sitting duration.
- Is there suitable space between office tables, filing cabinets and equipment for wheelchair users and visually impaired people to navigate around easily?
- Does the seating offer enough comfort and support, or are adapted chairs and tables required as a reasonable adjustment?
- Are there visual, tactile or auditory cues required to help those with sensory impairment locate items?
- Are other office staff and cleaning staff notified to keep areas clear, remove obstacles and not to move furniture or place items out of reach?

Staff amenities:

- Is the staff room accessible, including kettle, microwave, cutlery, plates, cups, fridge, storage and sink access?
- Are there accessible staff toilets, changing rooms and lockers?
- Are toilet facilities accessible, including the sink, soap, hand towels or driers? Are the toilets fitted with hand-rails and alarm cord?

Exercise environments

- Are the floor and pathways kept free from trip hazards such as water bottles, and moveable gym and pool equipment such as free weights, kettlebells, exercise balls, buoyancy floats, lifesaving equipment, etc?
- Are all staff and customers regularly reminded to keep pathways clear and return equipment?
- Can wheelchair users move between gym machines and equipment? Do they have enough room to get close beside clients using machines? Can they access equipment such as, weights, kettlebells and resistance bands?

- Is a specific pool wheelchair available for mobility-impaired swim instructors and pool attendants to safely access the poolside area?
- Can you limit the amount of noise in exercise areas or during some sessions, to help instructors who are hard of hearing, have concentration difficulties or visually impaired staff who rely more on verbal communication? This may also benefit some customers.
- Are spaces sufficiently lit and edges or changes in levels marked? Visually impaired employees may be affected by low level lighting in studios, poorly highlighted steps, or pool edges.



Making job roles accessible



Jobs can be made more accessible by altering working patterns, sharing tasks and providing equipment, support or alternative methods to do the job. Being open to working flexibly can make jobs more accessible to disabled people as well as staff who have parental or caring responsibilities, or short term injuries or conditions.

Flexible working patterns and breaks

All staff employed beyond 26 weeks can legally request flexible working but it can also be considered as a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person. This can include:

- ▮ Job sharing: For example, two people do one job and split the hours and duties.
- ▮ Home working: For example, a gym instructor updates client programmes at home, enabling them to leave early and avoid rush hour or go to an off-site location that is quieter and more comfortable.
- ▮ Part time: For example, an instructor who experiences fatigue or pain may not be able to sustain a full-time role. Part time hours will allow them more flexibility for recovery and/or therapy.
- ▮ Flexi-time: For example, an instructor works certain core hours between 10am to 4pm to avoid rush hour and provide more travel time.
- ▮ Annualised hours: For example, a staff member works a set number of hours per year, but has some flexibility about when they work.
- ▮ Staggered hours: For example, The employee has different start, finish and break times from other staff to enable them to take medications, rest breaks, or exercise and feed an assistance dog.

Below are some examples of how flexible working can help people with different impairments.

- ▮ Allow people to avoid busy rush hour journeys which may be more challenging for wheelchair users, or someone with a visual impairment or mental health condition.
- ▮ Provide extra time to reach a destination which may be useful for those using wheelchairs, mobility aids and people with visual, cognitive or mental health difficulties.
- ▮ Consider start and end times that suit a disabled employee's travel options which may be restricted at certain times. For example, travel passes for disabled people which can only be used after 9.30am.

- Allow for enough time between scheduled duties (for example, personal training sessions, delivery of exercise classes or swimming lessons, and meetings, training, and administrative tasks) so employees can:

- Move safely between locations, get changed, or access refreshments without feeling rushed (e.g., from the swimming pool to an upstairs office area). For example, if a number of people need to use a lift which only accommodates one person, or a wheelchair user needs to use an accessible changing room but the only one is already in use, it may take some time for an employee to get to their next location and duty.
- Digest any information covered (e.g., programming and goal setting for clients, training and meeting content and action points) at their own pace, recap any notes taken, and complete any necessary paperwork.
- Speak with a support worker who may have been taking notes for an employee with a visual, hearing or cognitive impairment, or a physical impairment that makes writing difficult.

- Include enough breaks during the day to enable employees (depending on impairment/condition) to:

- Use the toilet.
- Have a rest if they experience chronic pain or fatigue.

- Take medication.
- Take an assistance dog outside.








Job carving





Job carving is a term for customising job duties and can be used as a reasonable adjustment. If a candidate is unable to complete a certain task required for a particular job, the employer can delegate job duties across a team so that tasks are shared, and staff can contribute in relation to their strengths. For example:

- A visually impaired exercise class instructor is unable to undertake reception duties because it involves recognising customers for security reasons. She therefore does all the class music preparation for the team of instructors and they cover her reception duty.
- A swimming teacher who is a wheelchair user is unable to undertake lifeguard duty, and another member of pool staff needs to be present during his swimming lessons. He can then assist the other staff member with their duties, for example, creating pool timetables, contacting clients about swim classes, or dealing with payments for classes.
- A visually impaired duty manager is unable to undertake lock-up and alarm procedures if they are not fitted with tactile buttons. Another manager completes these tasks, and she organises the staff weekly rotas for the other manager instead.

Adjustments to instructor roles

When demonstrating and delivering gym, studio or pool-based classes and instruction, disabled fitness professionals might need some adjustments or require additional support. Consider the examples below, some of which include how an assistant funded through 'Access to Work' (see Section 7) could support the instructor.

Issue	Adjustments
An instructor with a physical impairment may not be able to physically demonstrate a particular exercise.	<p>The instructor can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Verbally describe exercises and instruct clients.  Use visual aids such as video or pictures.  Use another instructor to demonstrate an activity.
An instructor who is physically impaired or a wheelchair user may have limited capacity to lift weights or other equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  A limit on lifting can be put in place that suits the individual.  The instructor can ask the clients to collect and replace gym equipment in a manner that they would be expected to do during gym use.  The instructor can request support from a colleague or support worker.  Setting out and clearing up equipment for an activity session can be added to other staff members' rotas.
A visually-impaired gym instructor is unable to see if their client is following instruction correctly.	<p>The instructor can use touch-based feedback to feel what the client is doing and guide correct technique (with a policy on requesting and recording clients' consent to be touched). A support worker can also provide a visual description of the client's performance for the instructor.</p>
A fitness professional with impaired spatial awareness is at risk of dropping weights or colliding with other staff and customers.	<p>The instructor is restricted to only using fixed pieces of equipment and not using or carrying free weights. They can verbally instruct clients in the use of free weights, and have a colleague or support worker assist the client if heavier weights are used.</p>
A visually-impaired exercise class leader cannot see where to place equipment for a studio class.	<p>A colleague or support worker can assist in the setup initially. The instructor is provided with guidance and description so they can complete it themselves with support on future occasions, and possibly be independent on subsequent occasions.</p>

Issue	Adjustments
A visually impaired person or an instructor with limited hand function is unable to operate audio or visual media (e.g., sound system, video screens).	A colleague can assist with these tasks, and is provided with the instructor’s timetable so that they are aware of the times and locations of the classes to help set up.
A fitness professional with muscular, skeletal or fatigue-related conditions such as multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome experiences pain or tiredness during a shift.	Additional rest breaks between clients and classes are scheduled. Seats are available in the gym, studio or pool space for them to instruct from if necessary.
A fitness professional with a hearing impairment is struggling to hear clients in the gym.	Volume of music in the gym or exercise class can be reduced. Extra lighting set up to aid lip reading communication with clients.
An instructor with impaired hand function or missing limb is unable to write up client records.	Provide options for electronic recording of client programming, reporting of class registers etc., using systems compatible with speech to text software.
A stroke survivor or instructor with a cognitive or learning impairment is struggling to remember all the tasks she needs to complete in the gym.	Daily schedules can be written down in a bullet point list accompanied by pictures or symbols, in the order that tasks should be carried out. For each task, there is a step-by-step instruction sheet that can be accessed if required. This can be made digitally available on the instructor’s mobile phone, tablet or portable device.
A deaf group exercise instructor would not be able to hear clients or staff when they call him.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Colleagues can undertake basic British Sign Language training.  The instructor can wear a badge on the front and back of his shirt so people don’t call for him when he can’t see them.  The instructor can use a speech to text app on his mobile phone or tablet.  A BSL interpreter can be funded by Access to Work.

Issue	Adjustments
<p>A gym instructor with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can experience upsetting flashbacks of trauma when he hears loud bangs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Notices are put up to remind clients to carefully control machines and free weights without banging or dropping, and all staff are aware and trained to enforce it. ■ Staff are informed about the triggers and effects of PTSD, ideally with the instructor’s input. A plan is put in place so the instructor can leave the environment and go to a safe place and have his client or class covered if he experiences difficulties.
<p>An instructor with cerebral palsy is not able to handwrite the client programming paperwork.</p>	<p>The instructor may already have the relevant assistive technology, such as a tablet with voice to text (dictation) App, but if not, this can be funded via Access to Work.</p>



General workplace practices



Any practise designed to make work events more accessible to disabled people, are likely to enhance the experience for everyone. Don't wait until you have to make adjustments because you have a disabled employee, start implementing some of the simple recommendations below so they become common working practice.

Meetings and training

Preparing the meeting

- ▀ Communicate the purpose, outcomes, timings and location of the meeting or training in advance.
- ▀ Provide any information for meetings in accessible formats (e.g., presentation slides, agendas, briefing papers).
- ▀ Provide information in advance as required.
- ▀ Prepare any accessible hard copies.
- ▀ Send a list of attendees and any guest speakers to aid those with a visual impairment, social anxiety or an autism spectrum condition to familiarise themselves with who will be present.
- ▀ Provide an agenda with timings to enable people to see how far through the speaker is. This could be useful for those as mentioned above as well as people who need to take breaks for medication or personal care.
- ▀ Provide questions in advance for people who need to prepare their response due to anxiety or communication difficulties.

During the meeting

- ▀ Minute the meeting and circulate as soon as possible afterwards. This will benefit people with visual or hearing difficulties, those who need assistance with note taking due to a physical or cognitive difficulty and for people who find it hard to process and retain information.
- ▀ Consider audio recording the meeting. It is advisable that you have a policy on the use of recording equipment. Make everyone aware when recording is in process and that it is turned off when requested.
- ▀ Presentation slides should have accessible font types and sizes and good contrast (**see Section 12**).
- ▀ Any videos shown should have subtitles and be played at a volume level for everyone to hear. BSL interpretation may also be required (**see Section 12**).
- ▀ Use a microphone for larger meetings or noisy environments.
- ▀ Use free live speech to text technology (for example, Otter AI ⁷¹) projected onto a communal screen or onto a personal device. This will aid people with hearing loss and automatically record the session which can be made available in audio or text.

- Avoid writing on a board or adding ad-hoc text to presentation materials as visually impaired attendees may not be able to see this. Alternatively ensure an assistant can provide support by repeating the information or taking notes.
- An introduction by each member at the start of a meeting is useful to everyone but particularly for visually impaired people so they can tell who is present and where people are sitting.
- Support disabled employees to contribute to discussions with the following strategies. These will benefit people who have a cognitive or speech impairment, or are using speech to text technology or communicator support, or who are anxious or lack confidence:
 - Manage questions and discussion through the Chair so everyone gets the opportunity to speak.
 - Create small discussion groups for those not comfortable speaking in large groups.
 - Allow individuals to use a PowerPoint presentation and/or audio recording to get their point across.
 - Allow someone else to read out pre-prepared statements or notes made during the meeting.
 - Use a communication assistant if required.
- Avoid doing any of the following unless you have checked with the individual first:
 - Assign a role to someone with dyslexia which involves writing in front of others.
 - Ask someone with an autism spectrum condition, cognitive or speech impairment to speak to the group in an improvised manner.
- Consider a seating plan where:
 - Wheelchair users can sit at a table in their wheelchair, or transfer to an appropriate chair.
 - Those who may require breaks or to use the toilet to be seated nearest to an exit.
 - Employees who are deaf or hard of hearing might prefer to sit where they can clearly see their colleagues or the presenter speaking.
 - There is space for a scribe, guide, or assistance dog to sit with the employee.

After the meeting

- A disabled person may require additional time after a meeting to communicate with their support worker to digest, recap, clarify information, or ask questions about what was said. They may also require time to listen back to audio recordings, or read through notes taken.
- Any documentation provided after the meeting, for example the minutes of the meetings, or any other records and action points must be made available in accessible formats.

Social activities

There are several activities that staff might participate in that are not a formal part of their job but are related to the workplace. Even when socialising occurs outside of the workplace, if it is between work colleagues, some employment laws may still apply. All staff should consider the points below to support a disabled colleague to be included in such activities.

- Understand that an employee with an autism spectrum condition may not naturally recognise or engage with office politics, 'unwritten' office norms, or jokes, sarcasm and banter.
- Be aware and inform anyone with a sensory impairment of what is going on in the conversation if they miss out on more subtle communications (e.g., body language, gestures and whispering).
- Choose accessible places when socialising outside of work.
- Ask disabled colleagues what they would like to do or where to go. They may be able to recommend some accessible venues.
- Ensure everyone can participate in physical activities. For example, outdoor pursuits, fitness challenges and teambuilding events may need to be adapted to fully include disabled employees.

Job tasks

If required, provide clear and simple instructions for daily tasks to be undertaken. Individuals with an autism spectrum condition or mental health condition might benefit from having a discussion with a line manager in which expectations are made clear, and daily tasks and lists are set with them. Alternatively, allow them to tailor how they will complete the task, as they are best placed to know how they work most efficiently and effectively.

Personal development and review

Provide ongoing communication opportunities such as:

- Regular one-to-one face-to-face meetings.
- Formal appraisals or personal development reviews.
- Informal discussions with a line manager.
- Peer-mentoring with an experienced or long-standing employee.
- Open discussion forums in face-to-face meetings.
- An online platform or staff survey.

Facilitate discussion and feedback about:

- Their job role and duties, their experiences of undertaking the job and their ideas for new or improved strategies or duties.
- The effectiveness of any reasonable adjustments.
- Their experience of the workplace location and facilities.
- The availability and accessibility of training and CPD.
- How they feel about their colleagues and the culture within the organisation.
- Any challenges they may be facing.

Act upon the feedback:

- Ensure that feedback is recorded and received, considered and acted upon where necessary.
- Share feedback with staff who are responsible and can implement change i.e. CEO, SMT, HR, marketing, etc.
- Inform the employee of any outcomes or actions based upon their feedback.

Support career development

- Ensure disabled employees have equal access to continued professional development and career progression opportunities, such as internal and external training programs and promotions. Remove any overt or perceived barriers that disabled people may face in undertaking these opportunities. Implement fair and transparent procedures for employees to apply for these opportunities. Offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- Where possible, allow disabled employees to access a mentor in a senior position, and support disabled people in senior and executive board positions to become role models and mentors for other employees.



Section 10 References

71 <https://otter.ai>

Inclusive resources



“ If disabled people are represented then it would feel natural but sadly, it’s not happening in the fitness sector much. I’ve felt like I was completely invisible. ”

Disabled fitness professional

Consider how your organisation might revise the content of your marketing, communications and staff resources to represent diverse populations, and be more inclusive.

Why include disabled people in marketing and other literature and resources?

Including disabled people helps to:

- Show that disability is a normal part of life and disabled people are part of society that make up the leisure labour market and customer base.
- Convey to disabled people that they are a significant part of your audience and they are welcome to engage with your organisation.
- Provide aspirational role models of disabled people working in the leisure industry.
- Change attitudes and challenge society’s often low expectations of, and for, disabled people.

What can be made inclusive?

Review all existing material, resources and documents and consider where language and imagery could be amended to include disabled people. Train staff and provide access to inclusive imagery for creating new materials.

- Career and job advertising.
- Job application information packs.
- Staff newsletters and e-communications.
- Case studies and testimonials.
- Staff handbooks and organisational policy documents.
- Meeting and training resources such as PowerPoint presentations, videos and demonstrations.
- Webpages, apps and social media accounts and posts.
- Internal ‘intranet’ systems and webpages.



How to portray disabled people in training and work

There are a number of recommendations to follow when communicating about disabled people:

- Adhere to the principles of the social model of disability (**Section 14**) and language (**Section 15**). For example, remember to use 'person with impairment' or 'disabled person', not 'person with a disability'.
- Portray disability and disabled people positively and realistically (e.g., contributing to a staff meeting or instructing a client in the gym).
- Describe disabled people in an 'enabling' not 'disabling' manner, by highlighting individual strengths and roles that they can undertake, not focusing what they might be unable to do (e.g., case studies about disabled people gaining different qualifications and following different career pathways, with the focus on what makes them a great employee).
- Depict disabled people as active and independent individuals who take charge of their lives, not as passive people or victims (e.g., showing or describing a disabled person working in the gym or serving a customer at reception).
- Avoid the 'hero' and 'champion' connotations by describing disabled people as brave, or having overcome challenges. This can often be patronising and many disabled people do not identify with these terms. Many individuals with impairments do not want to be viewed as 'inspirational', and don't always have (or want to talk about) an emotional, poignant, thought-provoking or motivating story. Additionally, as with non-disabled people, depictions of very high achievers can lower the self-confidence of regular people. Many high achievers don't want to be thought of as having achieved highly despite of, or because of, an impairment. For testimonials and case studies, use a diverse range of disabled people with different impairments rather than a Paralympian or elite para-athlete.
- Avoid making assumptions about ability levels, intelligence levels, skills or experiences of people with different impairments (e.g., a blind instructor teaching an exercise to music class or a wheelchair user leading a group of staff.).
- Show the diversity amongst disabled people (e.g., show disabled people of different ages, ethnicities, fitness and mobility levels, in a variety of professional roles).

- Note that many impairments are not visible (e.g., mental health conditions, autism spectrum conditions, long-term health conditions, hearing and visual impairments), and so they are difficult to portray in communications. Avoid using an over-representation of wheelchair users to represent all disabled people. In written and audio communications, a variety of impairments can be described, but with imagery, this is more difficult. Consider how people with less visible impairments can be depicted by including mobility or communication aids in imagery or people using British Sign Language.
- Many disabled people also have personal assistants who are regularly under-represented in communications about disability. Include these assistants also, but in a manner depicting them as equals, not superior to, the disabled person. Images and communications about assistance dogs can also be included.
- Aim to include disabled people in a natural way, where they are inherently part of the wider objectives and practices of the organisation, without their disability being the focus of it, and without them being added in a 'token' manner. A person's disability is not their defining characteristic. Where possible include descriptions and imagery of disabled people in conjunction with non-disabled people to convey inclusivity and integration. In addition to course advertising, include images and description of disabled people in general strategy, planning and policy documents as well as other generic marketing and communications.
- Depict disabled and non-disabled people together in all roles of your organisation, particularly senior positions as this can help to change limiting assumptions about disabled people (e.g., encourage board members and senior and middle managers to share their stories and experiences of an impairment which will make others feel more at ease discussing disability issues).
- Where possible use real life case studies, quotes, photos and testimonials about the organisation as opposed to creating fictitious ones. This can make your messages more accurate and genuine.
- Ensure that the underlying messages communicated about disabled people observe all of the above recommendations, and that there are no intentional or unintentional negative connotations.
- Consider consulting with experts, including disabled people when creating resources.



Accessible resources

When something is accessible, it means it can be used by everyone. Accessible design is good design. Everything that is created should be as accessible, legible and readable to as many people as possible without any ‘disabling’ elements. It is recommended that the organisation updates their communications policy to ensure that all newly created resources meet basic accessibility standards. By applying a proactive not reactive approach from the beginning across all documents, it will likely save time and money recreating bespoke accessible resources for a job applicant or employee upon request. Existing materials can also be made accessible via a periodic review and update.

The key areas affecting accessibility are:

- A.** Writing styles.
- B.** Digital compatibility with screen reading software programmes.
- C.** Access to hard copy.

What should be made accessible?

All online and hard copies of the below should be created in accessible formats.

This includes the text, examples, case studies and testimonials, images, tables, diagrams, videos and webpages associated with each.

- Marketing and promotional materials (e.g., posters, circulars, flyers and advertisements for career opportunities).
- Staff newsletters and e-communications.
- Job application packs.
- Staff resources (e.g., handbooks, policy documents, contracts, equipment manuals, pool/gym procedures).
- Staff meeting resources (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, videos, agenda and minutes).
- Content of all webpages, and social media accounts and posts.
- Smartphone Apps, online portals used by staff, for example; to log client details.

In this section there are some key points for accessible designs and formats that will enable people with a variety of impairments, and anyone who uses assistive technology to access your resources. These recommendations will also help support individuals with different learning preferences, and those whose first language is not English. Links to websites with further details are provided.

The table below summarises these different types of accessible designs and formats included in this Guide, and highlights the relevance of each for different impairments.

Adjustment	Visual Impairment	Deaf/Hearing Impairment	Cognitive Impairment
Easy Read and Plain English.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Text.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Hyperlinks.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Tables.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Forms.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Images and diagrams.			
PowerPoint.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Reviewing and saving documents.	Generally helpful for everyone including non-disabled people.		
Websites and Apps.			
Social Media.			
Video Media.			
British Sign Language and 'speech to text' technology.			
Accessible Printed Resources.			
Braille and 'text to speech' technology.			
Tactile and 3D resources.			

A. Writing styles

Easy Read

Easy Read is a way of making information more accessible for individuals with learning difficulties, and concentrates only on the essential points of a document. Short sentences are used, and less common words are fully explained.

More information about Easy Read can be found at:

- DH Easy Read Guidance. ⁷²
- NHS Easy Read Guide. ⁷³

Plain English

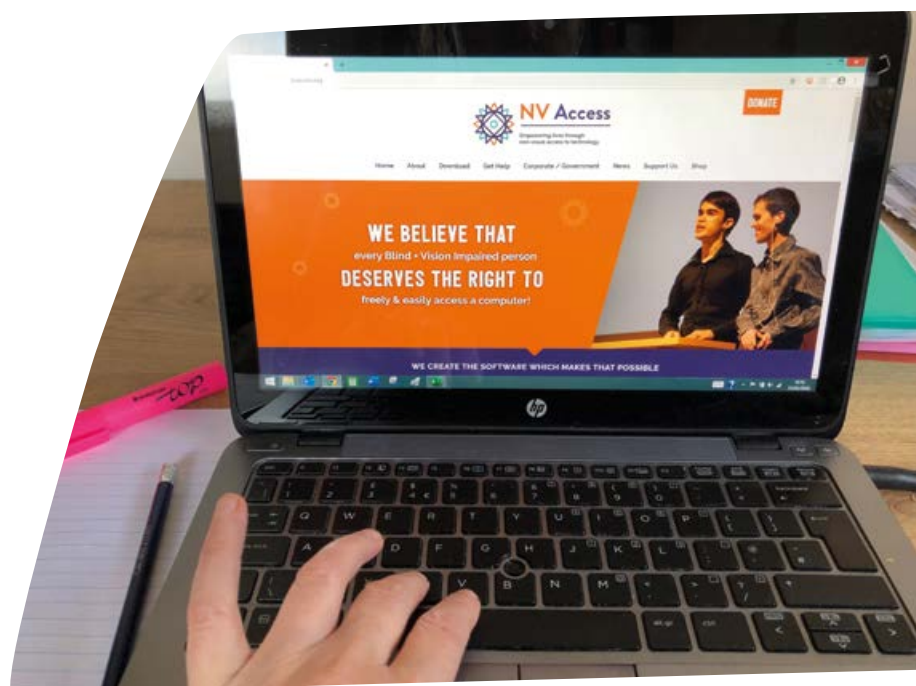
Plain English is, “a message, written with the reader in mind and with the right tone of voice, that is clear and concise” (Plain English Campaign).

*Research shows that people with higher literacy levels may also prefer plain English, because it allows them to understand the information as quickly as possible.

Find further guidance about writing in Plain English at Plain English Website. ⁷⁴

Top Tips

- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short.
- Use ‘you’ and ‘we’.
- Use the simplest words that work. For example ‘need’ not ‘require’, ‘tell’ not ‘inform’.
- Don’t be afraid to give instructions.
- Use active verbs. E.g., ‘Julie stopped (active verb) the treadmill’, not, ‘the treadmill was stopped (passive verb) by Julie’.
- Avoid nominalisations (changing a verb into a noun) e.g:
 - Develop, not development.
 - Available, not availability.
 - Refuse, not refusal.
- Use lists where appropriate.



* The Public Speaks: ⁷⁵ An Empirical Study of Legal Communication, Christopher R Trudeau.

B. Digital accessibility

Screen readers are software programs used by blind or visually impaired people to read the content of the digital screen by translating text on a screen to a user via a voice synthesiser or braille display. Screen readers can also be used by anyone who prefers to listen to audio rather than read.

To experience how screen readers work and test digital accessibility, the [NVDA screen reader](#) ⁷⁶ can be downloaded free. Further information on screen readers can be found at [Abilitynet Screen Reader Factsheet](#). ⁷⁷

The recommendations in this Guide for accessibility of digital documents are intended to provide an overview of the accessibility features that need to be considered, and links for further reading. You can take immediate action to improve the accessibility of resources by implementing the top tips. This Guide is not, however, designed to give exhaustive step-by-step technical instructions on inserting these features. This is because specific steps of how to include accessible features are dependent on which version of a software program (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint) is being used, whether the documents are being created on Windows or Mac operating systems, and whether the free or full version of software (e.g., Adobe Acrobat) is being used.

Creating fully accessible digital documents requires a level of technical knowledge and experience, and an input of time and resources. It is recommended that organisations commit to training the relevant staff members, and factor in time and a budget for disabled and non-disabled user testing. If design of documentation is outsourced, ensure that

the chosen developers are familiar with, and experienced in producing fully accessible resources.

For text (printed and digital versions)

Do use:

- Size 12 font and above.
- Simple sans serif fonts such as Arial or Calibri.
- Contrast between the text and the background.
- Standard formatting for lists such as bullet points and numbers rather than spaces and dashes.
- Text in regular lines with an easy to follow order.
- Bold text for emphasis, not italics or underlined text.
- Left-aligned text, not justified or centred text.
- Formatting styles such as Headings, Titles and Quotes.

Don't use:

- ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.
- Fonts with decorative detail or serifs such as Times New Roman.
- A mix of text colours, and avoid having red and green text together.
- Text laid over images or patterned backgrounds.
- The font (colour, shape, size, placement, etc.) to solely convey meaning.
- Blinking or moving text.
- Tables, graphs and diagrams unless necessary.

For hyperlinks

- Insert a 'table of contents' in a document, provide a content slide at the start of a PowerPoint presentation, and include a navigation page on a website.
- Ensure all of the above will automatically hyperlink to headings, page numbers and or subpages on a website.
- When inserting hyperlinks in text use meaningful words in short phrases for hyperlink titles. For example, title the hyperlink 'Inclusive Gyms' rather than 'Click Here'.

For tables

- Format tables with column headings that repeat when a table spans multiple pages.
- Left justify all information in all rows, even the heading rows.
- Avoid using vertical text in columns.

Forms

- Create fillable form fields with instructions for how the field is to be completed.
- Create clear spaces between form fields, and ensure each field is underneath the previous (avoid having fields to complete which are side by side).
- Sequence the fields in logical order.

For more information on how to create forms in Microsoft Word, and as PDF forms in Adobe Acrobat, see these links.

[Microsoft Fillable Forms.](#) 78

[Adobe Fillable Forms.](#) 79

For images and diagrams

- Text description (also known as alternative text or Alt text) is an additional commentary that describe photographs, pictures and diagrams in written format.
- Text description should describe important aspects of the image or diagram, but not be too long. For help in writing effective Alt Text see [Image Description Guidelines](#) 80 or [Poet Training Tool.](#) 81
- For complex diagrams, charts and infographics, there may not be a way to provide a short text description. In this instance, it would be of benefit to all users to have a thorough description of the image in the text of the document itself, either immediately before or after the image. If adding additional content and length to the document is not feasible, a hyperlink can be added to take the user to a footnote or appendix where additional text description is placed.
- If images are used for decorative purposes only (for example, a coloured bar to separate paragraphs on a page), then they do not need alternative description.
- Text description should not duplicate text already presented with the image unless it is part of the image itself.
- Information on adding alternative text to all images and diagrams in Microsoft Office software programs can be found at:

[Microsoft Alternative Text.](#) 82

For PowerPoint

- Use short, clear, and unique titles for each slide.
- Use a pre-defined PowerPoint slide template.
- Use minimum size 30 point text on PowerPoint Slides.
- Always include alternative text for images.
- Use sans-serif fonts and use full stops at the end of bullet points.
- Ensure slide templates, headings, font types and sizes are used consistently throughout a presentation.

Microsoft Office has a guide for creating accessible PowerPoint slides:

[Microsoft Power Point Guide.](#) ⁸³

Reviewing and saving documents

- Provide a clear and descriptive file name because this is the first piece of information that a user will access, and will give them a clear idea of the content.
- Provide a clear and descriptive first page title for the document, as this is the first piece of information a user will see on a document. This is also the first piece of information that assistive technology will read out when an individual opens the document.

- Assign the correct language to allow the assistive technology to automatically select the correct synthesizer for proper pronunciation of words to the reader.
- Be aware that scanned documents are created as JPEGs or image-based PDFs and so any text cannot be read by screenreaders.
- Use 'Speak' functions to check how the text will sound with a screen reader. [Microsoft Speak Text to Speech.](#) ⁸⁴
- Use the Accessibility Checker. ⁸⁵

The Microsoft Office website has a comprehensive guide for creating accessible Word documents and covers all of the recommendations above in detail.

[Microsoft Accessible Word Docs.](#) ⁸⁶

[Grackle](#) ⁸⁷ is a useful free to tool to check accessibility of GSuite files, e.g. Google Docs, sheets and slides.



Exporting to an accessible PDF

- You can create a document in either Microsoft Word and PowerPoint (or via GoogleDrive) then 'save-as' or 'export to' a PDF file.
- You can then use PDF editing software such as Adobe Acrobat to create tags in your documents after you convert them from the word format (Microsoft Word, Google Docs) to PDF.

Tags ensure Assistive Technology can:

- Follow the reading order.
- Ignore decorative images.
- Read the structure of tables.

The standards created by UKAAF (UK Association for Accessible Formats) are broken down into two levels. Level 1 ensures that a PDF is accessible for re-flowing (rearranging text that has been magnified or zoomed) and text to speech users. Level 2 ensures that the PDF is accessible for screen reader users.

[UKAAF PDF Standards.](#) ⁸⁸

More information on accessible PDFs can be found in the following guidance:

- [Gov Accessible PDF.](#) ⁸⁹
- [Adobe Accessible Resources.](#) ⁹⁰
- [Adobe Verify PDF.](#) ⁹¹
- [Adobe Accessibility Features.](#) ⁹²

Websites and applications

The way in which websites are designed can sometimes create barriers for people accessing information online with the use of assistive technology such as screen readers. Web content and design can also be a barrier for individuals with cognitive or learning impairments.

By law all public sector websites and mobile apps must meet the new accessibility regulations which came into force in 2018. You can read more on the [Government website.](#) ⁹³

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) have been produced by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C, the web's Governing Body). WCAG is essentially a series of checklists to help web designers ensure that websites are designed and written in an accessible manner. W3C provides an easy check overview for you to assess whether your website is accessible. The areas W3C highlight are:

- Clarity and positioning of page titles.
- Text alternative for images (Alt Text).
- Sufficient colour contrast between background and foreground. [WebAIM](#) ⁹⁴ is a website that provides guidance and tools in regards colour contrast.
- Text resizing and zoom functioning works according to user preference.
- Hyperlinks make sense by themselves.
- Keyboard access and visual focus.
- Forms and labels.
- Error messages.
- Multimedia alternatives.
- Basic website structure.

The Web Accessibility Initiative ⁹⁵ also provides strategies, standards, and supporting resources to help make your websites fully accessible. Website accessibility evaluation guidance is available at:

- [WAI Selecting Tools.](#) ⁹⁶
- [WAI Involving Users.](#) ⁹⁷

Ensure your web developers are familiar with WCAG guidelines, and during web development stages, factor in time and budget for disabled and non-disabled user testing before it goes live.

Social media

- Use short and simple captions in easy to read, plain and simple language.
- Use alternative text descriptions for any images.
- Use subtitles and captions on any video content, this will increase likelihood of video being watched by all users.

The following links provide guidance on social media accessibility:

- [RNIB Twitter Guide.](#) ⁹⁸
- [Social Media Guide.](#) ⁹⁹
- [Digital Blog.](#) ¹⁰⁰

Video media

- All video content should have captions and subtitles which are on-screen text representing speech and sound effects that may not be audible to people with hearing impairments. It can help some

people with learning impairments, and people whose first language is not English, as well as being useful in a noisy environment, or when audio can't be played in public places. Captions can either be open or closed. Closed captions can be turned on or off with the click of a button. Open captions are part of the video itself and cannot be turned off.

- Further guidance can be found at: [Techsmith Captions.](#) ¹⁰¹

- Avoid videos with no sound, and provide an audio voiceover of what the video is showing for people with a visual impairment. Avoid background music or other sounds during the voiceover.
- Add alternative text description for media content such as animation, audio or video.
- Do not set audio and video content to play automatically. For example, a visually impaired user could click on a webpage and hear audio from an embedded video playing which they have not selected to listen to. This automaticity makes it difficult to know what is happening and how to turn it off. Multimedia content should have a specific 'play' button that can be selected, which also contains built in description of the media, and text/audio instructions as to how to use the content.
- British Sign Language translation on videos will enable deaf people to access the information ([see page 71](#)).

Speech to text

You can automatically transcribe audio recordings into text using voice recognition software. The text will need to be reviewed and edited to ensure it is accurate. The text document can then be used to produce video captions or to provide a digital or hard copy of the transcript.

Transcribing speech into text in real time can improve access for people at meetings and events. The text can be accessed on a conference screen or sometimes it can be viewed on a personal device such as a laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

This not only helps deaf people to follow what is being said, but it can help anyone who is unable to hear clearly, or keep up with the conversation. For example, when someone takes notes, loses concentration, has difficulty processing what they hear or if English is a second language.

In addition to automatic voice recognition technology, a trained palantypist can attend in person and type on a keyboard as the speaking occurs.

To find a communication professional such as interpreters for deafblind people, lipspeakers, notetakers, sign language interpreters, sign language translators and speech to text reporters, visit [Royal National Institute for Deaf People \(RNID\)](#) ¹⁰² and National Register website at [NRCPD.](#) ¹⁰³

British Sign Language (BSL)

BSL is a gestural language used in the UK's Deaf community. It is not related to English or any other spoken languages, and some deaf people are unable to read English, or read subtitles at the speed required.

Embedding a BSL presenter into a video will allow users who cannot hear or read text to be able to access material, such as online learning, training films and adverts.

BSL interpretation might also be essential during interviews, inductions and meetings. A range of companies can provide BSL translation services in person or via live stream online using computers or mobile phones. More information about BSL and the role of BSL interpreters can be found at [British Deaf Association.](#) ¹⁰⁴



C. Access to hard copy

Accessible printed resources

Some documents may need to be provided as printed hard copies, such as application forms, staff training resources, policy documents, evaluation and appraisal forms. Consider the following points to ensure they are accessible:

- Minimum font size point 14 will help some individuals with visual impairments, and learning and cognitive impairments.
- Have options for the document to be printed on a different coloured paper, which might be useful for individuals with dyslexia and some visual impairments.
- Offer clear print and large print documentation for individuals with visual impairments.
 - UKAAF Print Guidelines. 105
 - Sensory Trust Print Factsheet. 106
- Braille is a tactile form of written language using raised dots. Sensory Trust and The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) offer some guidance on producing these accessible formats for written resources:
 - Sensory Trust Braille. 107
 - RNIB Braille. 108
- It is recommended that anyone delivering training (inhouse or via an external provider) considers the comprehensive information in Guide B: For Training Providers.

Other considerations for staff meetings or training

- It may be necessary to dim the lights when showing a video or presentation to prevent glare on the screen, but this may prevent a learner with a hearing impairment from lip-reading the speaker, or viewing a language support professional. Dimming lights may also prevent people from being able to take notes. Consider whether closing blinds or curtains and keeping some lights on may also prevent glare. Ask those in attendance what would work best for them.
- Check the quality of sound systems and the Hearing Loop system before playing videos with sound or before using a microphone. Ensure any radio systems for microphones or language translation do not affect the system in place for people who wear hearing aids.

Other good practice recommendations

- Create standard, consistent and accessible document and slide templates to be used across the organisation.
- Create summary versions of documentation and resources in Easy Read.
- Identify the need for alternative formats as soon as possible to ensure that accessible versions of resources are available at the same time as all other resources.

Section 12 References

- 72** <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130703133435/http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/docs/iod/easy-read-guidance.pdf>
- 73** <https://www.easyonthei-leeds.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/EasyreadGuide2009.pdf>
- 74** <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>
- 75** http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=christopher_trudeau
- 76** <https://www.nvaccess.org/download/>
- 77** <https://abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets/introduction-screen-readers>
- 78** <https://support.office.com/en-ie/article/create-a-fillable-form-39a58412-107e-426b-a10b-ac44937e3a9f>
- 79** <https://acrobat.adobe.com/uk/en/acrobat/how-to/create-fillable-pdf-forms-creator.html>
- 80** <http://diagramcenter.org/making-images-accessible.html>
- 81** <https://poet.diagramcenter.org/>
- 82** <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/add-alternative-text-to-a-shape-picture-chart-smartart-graphic-or-other-object-44989b2a-903c-4d9a-b742-6a75b451c669#PickTab=Windows>
- 83** <https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25#PickTab=Windows>
- 84** <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Use-the-Speak-text-to-speech-feature-to-read-text-aloud-459e7704-a76d-4fe2-ab48-189d6b83333c>
- 85** <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/improve-accessibility-with-the-accessibility-checker-a16f6de0-2f39-4a2b-8bd8-5ad801426c7f?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US>
- 86** <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US#PickTab=Windows>
- 87** <https://www.grackledocs.com>
- 88** <https://www.ukaaf.org/standards/#pdf>
- 89** www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk-accessible-pdfs
- 90** www.adobe.com/accessibility/resources.html
- 91** <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/create-verify-pdf-accessibility.html>
- 92** <https://helpx.adobe.com/uk/reader/using/accessibility-features.html>
- 93** www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps
- 94** <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- 95** <http://www.w3.org/WAI>
- 96** www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/tools/selecting/
- 97** www.w3.org/WAI/test-evaluate/involving-users/
- 98** <https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnibconnect/image-descriptions-twitter-a-quick-guide>
- 99** <https://literaturealliancescotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Accessible-Social-Media-Guide-2018.pdf>
- 100** <https://digitalblog.ons.gov.uk/2017/07/12/making-social-media-accessible/>
- 101** <https://www.techsmith.com/blog/add-captions-subtitle-s-video/>
- 102** <https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/communication-support/>
- 103** www.nrcpd.org.uk
- 104** <https://bda.org.uk/help-resources/>
- 105** <https://www.ukaaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/G003-UKAAF-Creating-clear-print-and-large-print-documents-v2.doc>
- 106** <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/factsheets/access-information-print.html>
- 107** <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/factsheets/access-information-braille.html>
- 108** www.rnib.org.uk/practical-help/reading/braille-and-moon-tactile-codes/writing-and-producing-braille

Part C

More Information



Equality, diversity and inclusion



Whilst equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are often listed together, it is important to understand the definition of each.

▀ **Equality**, often referred to as ‘Equal Opportunity’ is a legal requirement within the Equality Act 2010. It means that a person should be able to access the same opportunity and not be discriminated against based on any ‘protected characteristic’.

Disabled people may have different support or pathways to others that enable them to access the same opportunity.

▀ **Diversity** is about understanding that each individual is unique, and recognising similarities and differences. These can be in terms of age, disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, educational background, personality type, nationality, etc.

▀ **Inclusion** is about making all people feel included. An organisation with an inclusive approach:

- ▀ Engages each individual.
- ▀ Offers opportunities for input and decision-making.
- ▀ Gives people a sense of belonging and makes them feel valued.

An inclusive culture is created through the environment, processes and behaviours.

An organisation that offers equal opportunity, may still not succeed in attracting a diverse range of people if they don’t demonstrate an inclusive culture. For example, disabled people may not choose to take up an opportunity to train or work in the fitness and leisure sector if they perceive that they will not be welcomed or supported.

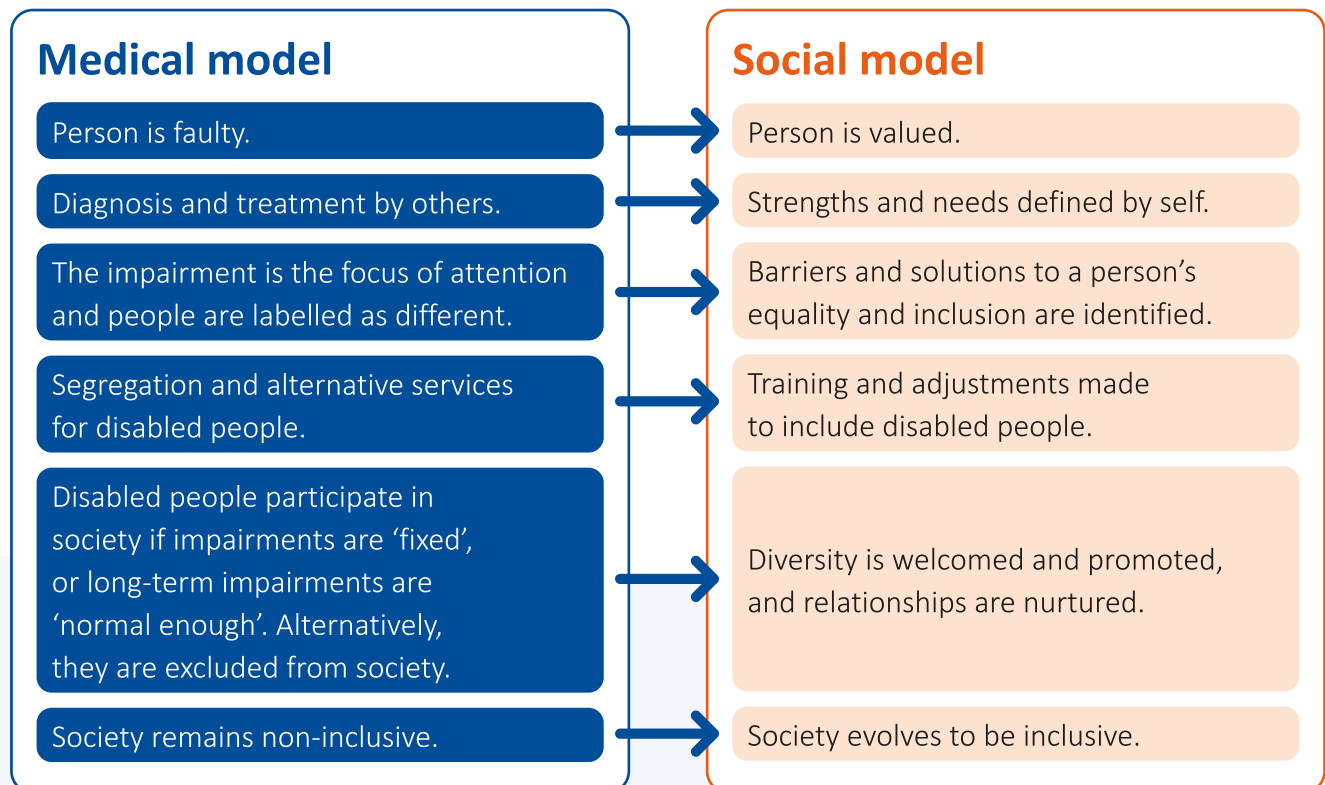


The social model of disability

The 'social model of disability' focuses on the systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) that mean society is the main contributory factor in disabling people. That is, disability is imposed on top of individuals' impairment, because of the way society is organised. Impairments alone do not have to lead to disability unless society

fails to take account of and include people regardless of their individual differences.

In summary, a disabled person is a person with an impairment (a condition, illness or loss/lack of function), who experiences disability (barriers and discrimination). This compares to the medical model, whereby the individual is expected to overcome their impairment in order to be included in society.





Going back to this example we used on page 21, consider the different approach between the social and medical model to resolve the issue.

The outdated medical model would consider the disabled person to be the problem. The solution therefore would be to fix the person's legs or for the individual to overcome their problem without inconveniencing others.

The social model focuses on removing the barrier that is disabling the person. In this case by providing a ramp or a lift.

Some other barriers are harder to see but can have the same disabling effect and require solutions.

For example, consider the impact of some of the following:

- ▮ Bullying
- ▮ Fear
- ▮ Ignorance
- ▮ Inaccessible resources
- ▮ Lack of role models
- ▮ Low expectations
- ▮ Poor communication
- ▮ Rigid assessment methods
- ▮ Unconscious bias

Language has also evolved to reflect the change in our view of disability. If we understand that the disabling factor does not belong to the individual but to society, then we use terms such as 'person with an impairment' or 'disabled person' as opposed to 'person with a disability'.



Disability language and etiquette

Language is powerful and understanding why certain terms are used can be as important as implementing them.

There have been many changes to disability-related language and terminology over the years. Creating a specific policy will help to embed appropriate language across the organisation.

Consider how you can help all staff to become familiar with this and apply the policy to all aspects of work. For example:

- Verbal communication between staff and colleagues, stakeholders, customers and media personnel.

- Written documentation such as staff handbooks, policy and strategy documents, and marketing.

A formal language policy can help align the organisation to its inclusive ethos and there are some commonly accepted examples below.

Not everyone will agree on everything, including disabled people, so whilst there may be a formal organisation policy, this should not prevent staff adjusting their language to suit a disabled person's preferences during direct communication.



Rather than

1. Person with a disability.
2. 'The disabled' or 'disabled community'.
3. 'Victim' or 'suffers from'.
4. Wheelchair-bound.
5. Special needs.
6. Assuming someone is a carer.
7. Assuming it is a 'Guide' dog.
8. Disabled facilities. e.g. toilets, parking etc.
9. Able-bodied or normal.



Use these words /phrases instead

1. Person with an impairment/condition.
2. A disabled person/disabled people.
3. Has/experiences/lives with (impairment or condition).
4. Wheelchair user/user of a mobility aid.
5. Specific requirement or adjustments.
6. Personal assistant, family member, relative, friend. Ask what their relationship is and use that term.
7. Assistance dog.
8. Accessible facilities.
9. Non-disabled.

Types of impairments

Categorising impairments is a simplistic approach but will enable you to capture and analyse data in a more detailed manner. For example, if an organisation has 20% of disabled staff it may appear very positive, however if the breakdown shows that the majority are people with a mental health condition and there are no staff members with a physical or sensory impairment, it may highlight that some barriers still exist and need addressing.

Not everyone who might be disabled will identify with that terminology, so it is advisable to ask: **Do you consider yourself to be disabled or have a long-term health condition, impairment or illness?**

Impairments may be categorised into five basic groups (physical, sensory, cognitive, mental and behavioural). You may wish to divide the categories further. A useful way to gather this information is to ask the question: **Do these health conditions, impairments or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? Please select all that apply.**

Physical

- ▮ Breathing or stamina.
- ▮ Chronic health condition (for example, but not limited to, diabetes, cardio-vascular disease, epilepsy).
- ▮ Dexterity or co-ordination (for example, lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard).

- ▮ Long term pain.
- ▮ Mobility (for example, walking short distances or climbing stairs).

Sensory

- ▮ Hearing (for example, deafness or partial hearing).
- ▮ Vision (for example, blindness or partial sight).

Cognitive

- ▮ Learning or understanding or concentration.
- ▮ Memory (for example, difficulty in recalling recent information).
- ▮ Speech or making yourself understood.

Mental

- ▮ Mental health (for example, but not limited to, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post traumatic stress disorder).

Behavioural

- ▮ Social or behavioural (for example, but not limited to, associated with autism, Asperger's syndrome or attention deficit disorder).

Other

- ▮ Other (please specify).
- ▮ Don't know.
- ▮ Prefer not to say.

Disability etiquette

- Use your regular tone of voice and address a disabled person in the same way as you talk to everyone else.
- Talk to the person directly, even if they have a personal assistant, companion or family member with them (e.g., look at the learner in the classroom not their BSL interpreter).
- Never attempt to speak or finish a sentence for the person you are talking to.
- Don't worry about being too politically correct. Being over-sensitive to the right and wrong language may make you feel awkward. It is important that as an organisation you adhere to an appropriate language policy, but when talking with a disabled individual use the terms they are comfortable with and ask if you are not sure.
- Ask if a person requires assistance. Never assume and give help without asking. Most people will wish to get around independently where possible. If a person does want help, ask how, and wait for their instructions before you act (e.g., picking up gym weights for someone because you assume they are too heavy).
- Be sensitive about physical contact. Never lean on someone's wheelchair or push it for them unless they have asked you to. Don't invade their personal space which includes their equipment. Don't touch a person with a visual impairment unless you have asked permission.
- Never touch or stroke an assistance dog as they are working.
- Focus on the abilities that an individual does have, not what they cannot do.
- Be mindful of invisible disabilities (e.g., mental health conditions, autism spectrum conditions, hearing loss, visual impairments, conditions such as epilepsy, cancer, Crohn's disease, and impairments causing joint or muscle pain, or chronic pain or fatigue symptoms).



Further support

Below are some links to other organisations that provide disability related resources and/or training packages. This is not an exhaustive list and many more can be found with an internet search.

- **Activity Alliance** ¹⁰⁹
(Talk to me principles, Inclusive communication guide).
- **British Deaf Association** ¹¹⁰
(BSL and Deaf communication guide).
- **Disability Matters** ¹¹¹
(e-learning resources).
- **Disability Rights UK** ¹¹²
(Advice, training and consultancy).
- **Government** ¹¹³
(Inclusive communications).
- **Government** ¹¹⁴
(Reasonable adjustments).
- **Inclusive Employers** ¹¹⁵
(Consultancy and training).
- **MENCAP** ¹¹⁶
(Learning impairments: Communication guide, Employers resource).
- **Mind** ¹¹⁷
(Mental health advice and workplace guidance).
- **Royal National Institute of Blind People** ¹¹⁸ (Business services, Teaching guides).
- **Sensory Support Service** ¹¹⁹
(Visual and hearing impairment training & resources).

Section 15 References

- 109** www.activityalliance.org.uk
- 110** www.bda.org.uk
- 111** www.disabilitymatters.org.uk
- 112** www.disabilityrightsuk.org
- 113** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication>
- 114** www.gov.uk/recruitment-disabled-people/reasonable-adjustments
- 115** www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk
- 116** www.mencap.org.uk
- 117** www.mind.org.uk
- 118** www.rnib.org.uk
- 119** www.sensorysupportservice.org.uk

Case study

Jude Caunter Fitness Instructor

“ For people saying ‘I can’t exercise’, I feel compelled to stand, figuratively, and say, ‘hang on a minute, yes you can’. I bring that to this job. I think a lot of employers are a bit wary that a disabled employee is going to be on the sick all the time, but that's not true. This Centre is so supportive of me, I know they've got my back, they want me to succeed, I know they see how hard I work. They invested in me by paying for my Level 4 course and my first aid qualification, so I know they appreciate that I'm here. Yeah, I do want to pay them back. ”

Read more about Jude's story and other case studies at www.InstructAbility.org.uk



“ I just love the class. I was so anxious to do it, because I thought, ‘it’s a class, I’m overweight, I’m in a wheelchair, I can’t lift my arm above my head’, sort of thing. I was very self-conscious, but it’s just so light-hearted, Jude makes it so casual and fun, and she adjusts the exercises to suit different people’s limitations because she knows what it’s like, and she has them too. And we brought my brother’s girlfriend, who’s a PE teacher, and she did it, and afterwards, she was like, ‘I’m worn out’. So it’s nice that although it’s seated, non-disabled people can do it too, and still get a workout. ”

Seated SOSA Group Exercise Client

“ Jude has been so valuable to us and no doubt has driven the idea of inclusivity in this Centre. I've managed a number of centres. You might think what you need to do, to be more inclusive, is develop signage or it might be about access and lifts and spaces, etc., but there's nothing better than Jude coming in and making suggestions based on her actual experiences. Who's better placed to come in and say, 'that access for wheelchairs into the gym or the studio is an issue and needs looking at'? Or 'can we look at how we can adapt the programme for these clients'? We have an employee who is physically experiencing our Centre.

We have changed some of our policies and procedures at the Centre because of the insight Jude has provided. Jude is the first wheelchair user employee we've had here. Initially you think, what is that going to mean? And actually, it doesn't really mean anything. It's just a little bit of policy and procedure around, 'OK we've got to think about certain things now, like the gym's upstairs, we need a simple reconfiguration of the office so she can move around, and how do we adapt our fire procedures?' We've done all that now and it was easy and it all benefits every employee, we wouldn't have done it otherwise.

She drove the inclusivity agenda for clients too, maybe not consciously to start with, but naturally saying, 'if we want more of these clients this is where the challenges are'.

Recently we've been talking about how we communicate and market our offers. When we say something is inclusive or modified, what does that actually mean to people? We're breaking that down and communicating specifically about access and information about sessions and promoting Jude as an instructor now, all to break down barriers. And we're creating our own 'inclusive session' logo to put on programme information. Jude does a lot of networking within the City, for example with a Disability Forum, and outreach work with local groups. Now we get people contacting us to say, 'we hear you're doing great things, can you come and tell our group what they are?' And Jude will say, 'come over and I'll show you', so we're getting new potential clients in.

We support Jude because if Jude's work experience is positive, then when other disabled clients come into the Centre they have a more positive experience. We're already in that inclusive mindset and we've already addressed the little niggles because Jude's already thought ahead and worked out what the solutions might look like for us. ”

Matt Mason
- Centre Director



“ I can talk all day about the benefits of having Jude here. I don't really see her as a disabled instructor. She's just Jude, part of the team.

She has opened so many doors for the Centre as a whole. We wouldn't have got funding for the new gym equipment, or be recognised as an inclusive gym otherwise. She was instrumental by feeding her experiences into our applications.

We had a customer that was blind and in a chair. By the end of Jude working with him he was walking on the treadmill for 20 minutes. That specialised one-to-one support helping him to overcome barriers and giving him the courage to push himself a little bit more was important. I'm not quite sure whether we would have got the same outcome if Jude hadn't been the instructor sharing her experiences with him.

We have new and more inclusive classes now. Jude has brought in Seated SOSA and the sessions are so popular we've added more to the timetable. By having Jude around we are showing that anything is possible for our customers. If people with an impairment are coming to the Centre then they can relate to Jude, it's opening doors for them. We're showing that they're integrated and it shows that it's a normal everyday thing that everyone can work out together in the same location. ”

Rebecca Spencer
- Line Manager



“ The fact that Jude is in a wheelchair like me, she can help me with ideas of how to get onto the equipment. Another non-disabled instructor could say, ‘use this equipment’, but equipment is often very intimidating to transfer onto. Whereas Jude would come to the piece of equipment and go, ‘okay, this bit can take your weight. You can push on this and this. Don’t lean on this, and this is how I transfer, but maybe for you, it might be better doing it like this’.

I gained a lot of weight when I got in a wheelchair, and Jude understands that more than any other instructor I’ve had, and she doesn’t judge. And also, she doesn’t set specific reps, because she understands that with a disability, you have good and bad days. She says, ‘do a minimum of this, but if you’re on a good day, do a maximum of this. Don’t go over this yet’. So, she gives you the room to, work hard if it’s a good day; if it’s a bad day, she’s just happy you came.

It’s the whole picture really, she also understands that I want to get fit enough to be able to go back to work. She understands that and wants to help me get there mentally as well as physically. She understands the depression side of disability. Now I have come and seen somebody like her who is able to use a gym, who is able to work, and that finds ways around challenges, it’s given me that little bit of inspiration to want to do it too.”

Individual Gym Client





The research

The research that informs this Guide is a pioneering piece of work that draws together the thoughts, ideas and experiences of disability within the fitness and leisure industry from all layers of the sector.

The evidence gathered from the research was translated into a set of validated guidelines, aligned to the social model of disability (see **Glossary**).

The project was funded by Sport England, which has aims to increase the number of disabled people in the sector workforce,

Working in an Active Nation ¹²⁰

and in coaching and volunteering.

Coaching in an Active Nation ¹²¹

The researchers:

Professor Brett Smith (Durham University)
& **Dr Juliette Stebbings**
(University of Portsmouth).

- Professor Smith has over 20 years of experience conducting world-leading research with disabled people and disabled organisations on how to promote physical activity and ensure fitness and leisure, sport, and exercise industries are inclusive.

- Dr Stebbings is a Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology, and conducts research aimed at increasing the levels of community-based sport and physical activity in marginalised populations, including disadvantaged young people, older adults, and disabled people.

Hilary Familoe (InstructAbility Strategic Lead) was also a key collaborator throughout the research process.

The research participants included:

- Disabled fitness professionals and their clients (disabled and non-disabled).
- Staff in a range of roles within training provider organisations.
- Individuals from a range of roles and levels within leisure operator organisations. These included senior management, human resources, marketing, media and communications and frontline staff.
- Individuals from other disability organisations and fitness and leisure sector stakeholders.

Section 17 References

120 <https://www.sportengland.org/media/13505/working-in-an-active-nation-11-e-version.pdf>

121 https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/coaching-in-an-active-nation_the-coaching-plan-for-england.pdf

Glossary of terms

- **Accessibility:** The design of products, devices, services and environments to ensure that they are available and usable by all, and are created in such a way to not exclude a person due to their impairment. Find out more about accessibility here.
- **Additional needs:** Requirements for products, services, or environments to be adapted, specialised or made more accommodating (e.g., additional / specialised equipment, adjustments to the layout of the physical environment, presence of a support worker) to assist a disabled person to participate fully in day-to-day activities.
- **Disability:** The ways in which a health condition or impairment, in interaction with the wider environment, results in a functional limitation.
- **Disabled person:** Someone with an impairment who experiences the loss or limitation of opportunities to participate in society on an equal level with others because of social, attitudinal, physical or environmental barriers.
- **Discrimination:** Treating a person unfairly, in an unjust or prejudiced manner, because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics.

A disabled person may be disadvantaged, or denied opportunities, compared to their non-disabled peers, because of their impairment.

- **Equality Act 2010:** The Act legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws (e.g., the Disability Discrimination Act 1995). The Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment.
- The impairment has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

For more information about the definitions of ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’, about progressive conditions and what is not counted as a disability, see [Equality Act Definition](#). ¹²²

- **Impairment:** A physical or mental injury, illness or congenital condition which has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long term’ impact upon an individual’s physiological or psychological function, thereby affecting their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

Glossary of terms References

¹²² <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

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Guide C: For Employers

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