Employing disabled workers in adult social care and health
Busting the myths

By thinking and acting differently you could find your next perfect hire

Widen your talent pool

Finding people with the right values is key to high quality care and support.

3.4 million disabled people are currently working in the UK, with millions more who want the opportunity to work and have valuable skills and experience to offer, but many still find it difficult to find employment.

Disabled friendly policies aren't just about recruiting new workers, they should support existing ones too. 83% of disabled people acquire their disability or long term health condition during their working life, so anyone could be affected.

It's vital that every employer does more to support and encourage a more diverse workforce into adult social care and health roles, and support people to stay and progress.

Supporting disability and employment: why?

Encouraging disabled people to apply for roles and ensuring you have the right support in place will help you maximise your recruitment and retention efforts.

Actively targeting and recruiting disabled people will:

- increase the quality of applicants with lived and diverse experiences
- promote diversity in the workplace
- improve services for people who need care and support
- lead to a workplace that better reflects the community you serve.

Adult social care and health employers need to lead by example when employing disabled people

Busting the myths: employing disabled workers

There are lots of myths about employing disabled people.

Some employers worry about 'getting it wrong'. Some are fearful of the perceived cost, whilst others may have the perception that disabled people can't perform the job.

The truth is that many disabled people have lots to offer the adult social care and health workforce.

It's important that employers acknowledge that these are myths so they can find more workers with the right values for our sector, avoid discrimination and change their workplace culture.

Myth: It costs a lot to employ someone who's disabled

Fact: There may be changes that you need to make when you employ a disabled worker; these are called 'reasonable adjustments.'

However, a lot of disabled people don't need reasonable adjustments and the average cost of a reasonable adjustment is less than £80.

There is funding available to help disabled people with any reasonable adjustments.

A lot of reasonable adjustments, such as flexible working, might also be beneficial to the wider workforce for example older workers or those with caring responsibilities.

Tips

- Review your current policies, see what's already in place and where the gaps are, e.g. do you already have a flexible working policy?
- Have testimonials on your website from workers about how you support diversity in the workforce.
- Become a Disability Confident employer.
- Contact Disability Rights UK to make the most out of 'peer modelling.'

More information to help

- Reasonable adjustments, DWP **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ reasonableadjustments**
- Access to Work grant, DWP **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ accesstowork**

Myth: Disabled people have a higher absentee rate than their colleagues

Fact: Studies show that on average disabled workers have lower absence rates than their colleagues. Absenteeism is a subject that line managers must address with all workers and clear guidance is available.

Stephen has autism and works in the kitchen at Chartwells. His employer says:

"What I like about Stephen is that he doesn't let us down, he's always punctual. Stephen is a very loyal employee and has got a good attendance record, and in fact I cannot remember him ever having a day off."

Tips

- Ensure you have effective people management processes in place that include absenteeism.
- Make use of employer forums for networking and support.
- Make sure managers have training to help them support teams effectively.
- Make sure you have fair, disability related leave policies in place for disabled workers.

More information to help

- Managing staff absence, ACAS **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ managingabsence**
- People Performance Management toolkit, Skills for Care **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PPMT**

Myth: If I employ a disabled worker, someone will always have to help them

Fact: A good induction and support programme is crucial, especially in the first few months.

With dedicated training and support, as with all workers, many disabled workers adjust to their job role and their disability does not affect their ability to work unaided.

"Stephen very much has a routine and is very particular in the way he works. I give him a job to do… I don't have to go back and check."

Tips

- Ensure workers have a thorough induction and have clear responsibilities.
- Introduce mentors or buddies for new workers.
- Contact your local job coach or supported employment services to support disabled people into work.

More information to help

- Access to Work grant, DWP
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/accesstowork
- Supported internships, DWP
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/supportedinternships
- British Association for Supported Employment
  www.base-uk.org
- Remploy
  www.remploy.co.uk

Myth: People who need care and support wouldn't like disabled people helping them

Fact: There are lots of different disabilities, some of which aren't obvious, and lots of people don't declare them. Therefore this may rarely be an issue.

Disabled workers can also have lived experience that could help them provide great, insightful care and support to others. If you hire workers with the right values; good induction, training and management will do the rest.

"Disabled people have the passion and empathy to support others and have learned to come up with creative solutions to the difficulties of everyday life. They see what and how things could improve."

Tips

- Where possible, match care workers with people who have similar interests, personalities and values.
- Encourage workers to be open about their disabilities and promote discussions about disability between workers and people who need care and support.
- Ensure your workforce reflects the diversity of the local community you serve.

More information to help

- Get out and get active **www.disabilityrightsuk.org /how-we-can-help/special-projects/get-out-get-active**
- Peer support, Disability Rights **www.disabilityrightsuk.org/ peer-modelling**

Myth: I can't fire or discipline an employee with a disability

Fact: While there are laws in place, such as the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act that serve to protect the rights of all workers, there are no special procedures for firing or disciplining disabled workers.

All employers should have fair and equitable procedures in place for all workers.

Philip is a project coordinator for Sight Service 1, and lost his eyesight at a young age. He says:

"Equality means having systems in place which really create a level playing field."

Tips

- Make sure you establish clear and mutual expectations from the start.
- Openly discuss abilities and support against job requirements at interview.
- Have people management processes in place.
- Discuss any issues with workers and look for solutions.
- Develop confident managers who apply correct procedures fairly.

More information to help

- Equality Act 2010: guidance, DWP **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ equalityact**
- People Performance Management toolkit, Skills for Care **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PPMT**
- ACAS code of conduct on disciplinary and grievance **www.acas.org.uk**

Myth: Social care and health workers need to be physically strong with good mobility

Fact: Not all disabilities are physical. There are lots of different disabilities, many of which have no impact on the strength or mobility of the individual.

There are also lots of different job roles within adult social care and health and not all are physically demanding.

Did you know?
Less than 2% of disabled people are wheelchair users.

Tips

- Every candidate is unique; think about the abilities of the individual.
- Recruit people into roles matched or carved to their abilities.
- Review your interviewing process to include questions that ask about values, behaviours and abilities rather than limitations.

More information to help

- Preventing discrimination in recruitment, DWP
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ preventingdiscrimination
- Recruiting for values in social care toolkit
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values
- Values based recruitment toolkit in health care
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ healthvalues

Myth: Disabled workers are sensitive and I don't want to say the wrong thing

Fact: All workers, including disabled people are unique and you shouldn't presume they'll act in a certain way.

You're not expected to be an expert. Most disabled people are happy to have an open and honest conversation. If an applicant declares a disability determine together what, if any, support they might need.

It's important to be willing to learn and adapt, and show all your workers that you're willing to support them.

Tips

- Ask questions that relate to the working environment.
- Don't presume that disabled workers can't do a particular task.
- Don't categorise people into disability 'types'.
- Contact expert disability groups who might offer support and training.

More information to help

- An A-Z guide on disabilities **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ a-zdisabilities**
- End the Awkward, Scope **www.scope.org.uk/ end-the-awkward**
- Asking questions about disability and health, DWP **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ askingquestions**

Myth: Disabled people are work shy and lazy

Fact: 3.4 million disabled people are now in work – an increase of half a million over the past three years.

According to the Labour Force Study, disabled people are now more likely to be employed than in 2002. Adult social care and health employers need to adapt so they can better support and motivate disabled workers.

Philip works as a project coordinator with Sight Service 1 who have helped over 30 people with sight loss get into work. He says:

"There are so many talented workers and it gives us great satisfaction to see them achieve the opportunities they deserve."

Tips

- Ensure you support all workers so they feel confident and motivated in their role.
- Provide regular supervision and appraisal to keep a two way conversation with workers.
- Offer volunteering or work experience to see if people are right for the job before offering full time employment.

More information to help

- Effective supervision, Skills for Care
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/supervision
- *I Care…Ambassadors*
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/icareambassadors
- Inspiring the future
  www.inspiringthefuture.org

Let's summarise

There are over seven million people of working age who have declared a disability, many of whom want to work.

That's a huge pool of talent if you're looking for people with the right values, behaviours and attitudes to work in adult social care and health.

Remember not all disabilities are visible, and they don't necessarily affect a person's ability to work.

Statistically you are likely to already, or will in the future, employ people with a disability or long term health condition.

7 million
people of working age have declared a disability

1 in 4
people will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year

1 in 6
people live with some sort of hearing loss

1.87 million
people live with sight loss

It's vital that you have the right support in place to recruit, retain and progress your talent.

Useful links and resources

Clear kit – recruiting and retaining disabled talent
www.clearkit.co.uk

Disability and employment: a guide for adult social care and health employers
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ disabilityandemployment

Disability Rights UK
www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Employing disabled people and people with a health condition, DWP
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ employingdisabledpeople

Voluntary Organisations Disability Group
www.vodg.org.uk/publications/ closing-the-disability-gap