



## The employer perspective

Diane Lightfoot, CEO, Business Disability Forum  
BASE conference, 9 November 2017

## Who we are

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## About Business Disability Forum

Business Disability Forum is a not-for-profit member organisation that makes it easier and more rewarding to do business with and employ disabled people

- We have more than twenty-five years' experience of providing pragmatic support to organisations by sharing expertise and advice, providing training and facilitating networking opportunities

Ultimately, we exist to transform the life changes disabled people as employees and consumers

## Our membership



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## W2W providers in membership

- APM UK Ltd
- Ingeus
- Maximus UK
- Remploy
- Shaw Trust

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## What do we do?

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**Advice service**      **Consultancy**      **Learning and development**

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**Resources and toolkits**      **Networking events**      **Research and insights**

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## Technology Taskforce

The Technology Taskforce is a group of individuals from leading UK and global organisations in BDF's Partner Group, who work together to improve the use of inclusive design and accessible technology.

The Taskforce provides tools, best practice, networking opportunities and technology industry influence to help organisations to create and deploy more accessible technology.



[businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership/technology-taskforce](http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership/technology-taskforce)

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## Disability Confident and the Disability Standard

- Disability Confident – 3 levels
- We accredit level 3 "Leader" status for DWP
- Our Disability Standard goes beyond this to support businesses to become "Disability Smart"
- Online self assessment tool or assessed by us
- Whole organisation approach
- Measure and monitor your performance in ten areas
- Identify areas and action plans for improvement

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## Disability Standard

1. Commitment
2. Know-how
3. Adjustments
4. Recruitment
5. Retention
6. Product and services
7. Suppliers and partners
8. Communication
9. Premises
10. Information and communication (ICT)



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## The role of employers

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## Where employers fit in

- Key piece in the jigsaw in supporting disabled people into work.
- But often overlooked in W2W until the last stage...
- ...or seen as the "bad guys"
- Yet most employers want to do the right thing...
- ...and many have gone beyond this to see the business case
- Private sector often leads the way - state of the sector report
- Lots of good practice

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## What employers worry about

- Mental Health
  - Fluctuating conditions
- Having the conversation – fear of getting it wrong
- Performance and Attendance management
- Workplace adjustments (reasonable adjustments)
  - in house or outsource?
  - Passporting between roles
  - Cost (most less than £150 – lots are free) – and AtW
  - Soft adjustments
  - Timeliness

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## What works – organisation level

- A whole organisation approach – our disability standard 10 areas
- Sponsors, champions and allies
- Senior level lead – embedded from the top
- Creating a culture where people tell you what they need
- Getting the language right
- Inclusive design
- Flexible working practices for everyone
- Focus on "productivity tools" rather than adjustments
- *NB effect on stats*

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## What works – individual level

- The right person for the right job – job matching/carving
- Barrier free recruitment including placements as "reasonable adjustment"
- Positive recruitment practices e.g. Disability Confidence
- Importance of the line manager relationship – confidence and trust
- Practical support as well as culture change
- Holistic and whole person support
- Confidence to have the conversation

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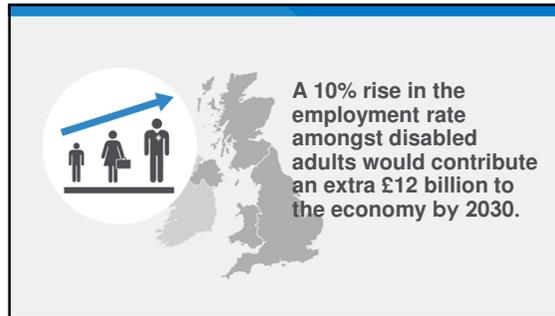
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## Engaging employers – the business case

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## Other hooks...

- Retaining talent – when people acquire a disability
- Low unemployment – reaching the widest possible talent pool
- Brexit! – retail, catering, hospitality and especially entry level jobs
- Diversification = better teams, more productive, more creative, better problem solving, avoiding group think
- Image and link to customers and representation
- Morale – other employees
- Business case around loyalty, sick days and employee turnover...
- ...though remember this may be for a variety of reasons!

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## Examples of Excellence

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## Lots of best practice out there!

- Barclays workplace passport/tailored adjustment plan
- Civil Service Autism Exchange programme
- Microsoft autism-targeted recruitment programme
- EY Stammering network – senior level champions
- HS2 approach to procurement – 14% of tender scored on diversity
- Plus programmes which "go the extra mile"...

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## National Grid "Employability"

- Supported Internship programme in partnership with local school
- First cohort of interns in Warwick in September 2013.
- Now runs in Warwick, Hinckley, Solihull, Wokingham and Thorpe Park
- Internships for 25 young people each academic year
- Gives students the chance to work in different placements, developing skills they can use in future employment
- Taster days held to gauge interest
- Track record of moving into jobs
- Positive effect on staff morale

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## Manchester Met University

Work placements for young people with a learning disability.

- ✓ Bridging the Gap Traineeship Programme
- ✓ Partnering with local schools to offer placements
- ✓ Lasts one academic year - covering 3-4 different areas of the university e.g. Admin, Catering, IT, Mailroom, etc.



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## Bridging the Gap Traineeship Programme

Work placements for young people with a learning disability.

- ✓ Students develop work skills;
- ✓ Plus develop soft skills e.g. confidence, independence.
- ✓ Also supported with CV writing, interview technique and applying for paid work.



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### Bridging the Gap Traineeship Programme

Community and partnership working with local schools.



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## How welfare to work providers can work with employers

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### Walk in their shoes

- Remember employers are customers with their own needs – understand their point of view
- Engage them early on
- Focus on the business case(s) – what will resonate?
  - Business needs and skills shortages
  - Their market – what do their consumers want?
- Understand (and address) their fears
- Understand where they are at and any constraints
- Offer options – e.g. a placement to enhance a candidate's CV even if a job isn't evaluable or influencing supply chains

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### Offering support

- Help them with barrier free recruitment – applications and interviews
- Tell them about Access to Work
- Support workplace adjustments "productivity tools"
- Looking across the business to identify roles and job carve
- Explore partnerships – e.g. autism specific or learning disability specific programmes – good for talent acquisition, team morale, PR...
- Get a senior level contact to drive change
- Focus on the whole organisation – not just about HR
- Provide support to line managers
- Promote us as a resource – and join us!

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## Contact us

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 building disability support organisations