

## Executive Summary

# An Employers Guide

to

# Supported Employment

Employing people with a mental health condition, a learning disability and / or autism

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This publication has been produced by the National Development Team for inclusion as part of the

**The Valuing People's Alliance**



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**This document is an executive summary of an employer's guide to supported employment aimed primarily at NHS employers produced by the Valuing People's Alliance which was led by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi).**

The guide aims to support employers including line managers, Human Resources (HR) leads and others responsible for recruitment and others responsible for recruitment to improve the diversity of their workforce through providing more employment opportunities, better outcomes and support for people with mental health conditions, a learning disability and / or autism, and sets out the business case for this.

The guide was co-produced with people with mental health conditions, a learning disability and / or autism as well as employers through focus groups and questionnaires. The guide includes many quotes from the focus groups. It also includes a number of examples from practice, setting out how employers have worked in partnership with disabled people to improve the recruitment and selection of people with mental health conditions, a learning disability and / or autism. Information on solutions to the challenges faced can be found within the guide, together with details about further resources, detailed guidance on how to address the issues identified and links to more detailed case studies which set out how local areas have addressed particular issues. Each section of the guide includes a summary of action points for employers to consider.

## **The Business Case**

Improving the diversity of the workforce is especially important given the low employment rates of people with a mental health condition, a learning disability and / or autism. Current employment rates for the non-disabled population are 80% and less than half (48%) of disabled people are in employment in the UK (people aged 16-64).<sup>1</sup> People with mental health conditions, a learning disability and / or autism fare even worse as their employment rates are significantly lower. Employment is a primary determinant of health, impacting both directly and indirectly on the individual, their families and communities.<sup>2</sup> Having a job may also ensure that people with mental health conditions, a learning disability and / or autism are supported to full and active members of their workforces and wider communities, both socially and economically. This is an important consideration for NHS England and Public Health England, as increasing the employment rate of disabled people is likely to have a positive impact on the overall health and wellbeing of the population. Furthermore, it will allow NHS organisations to make a meaningful contribution to the Government's target to increase the number of disabled people in employment by 1 million by 2027.<sup>3</sup> The business case for a diverse workforce is very well documented. Advantages include small costs yet big benefits, reduced staff turnover, increased staff loyalty, staff morale, and productivity. A diverse workforce which brings together people

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/work-health-and-disability-improving-lives/work-health-and-disability-green-paper-improving-lives#work-health-and-disability-facts-and-figures>

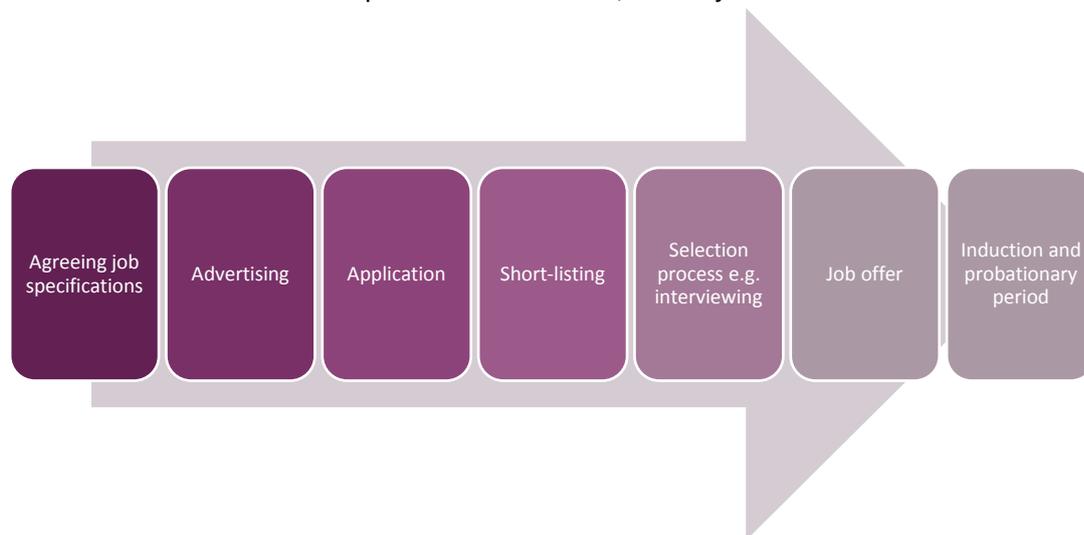
<sup>2</sup> JM.McGinnis , P.Williams-Russo, JR. Knickman, The case for more active policy attention to health promotion. Health Affairs. 2002;21(2):78-93

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strategy-seeks-one-million-more-disabled-people-in-work-by-2027>

with different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences can inform the development of new or enhanced products or services, open up new market opportunities, improve market share and broaden an organisation's customer base, and lead to more innovative and creative business solutions. Employing more people with a mental health condition, a learning disability and / or autism in the health and social care sector would mean a workforce that better reflects those it serves. In turn, this should mean a workforce that is better able to understand those communities and address their needs. In the case of people with a learning disability and those with mental health conditions, greater diversity in the workforce may assist services to reduce the well documented and significant health inequalities experienced by these groups.

## Recruitment, selection and retention

Successful talent management starts with recruitment and selection, but many processes adopted by employers do not allow people to fully demonstrate their abilities. Recruitment and selection often rely on traditional recruitment methods such as on-line application forms, panel interviews and various forms of testing. These methods can have the effect of unintentionally excluding people with a mental health condition, a learning disability and / or autism as they are not necessarily the best way of fully understanding their ability to fulfil a job role. **There are a number of reasonable adjustments made to the recruitment and selection processes which will level the playing field for people with a mental health condition, learning disability and / or autism.** The recruitment process is as follows, and adjustments can be made at each stage:



Supported employment including supported internships and inclusive apprenticeships can help employers see the benefits of adapting their recruitment and selection processes to include methods such as working interviews and reasonable adjustments. The supported employment model uses a partnership approach to help disabled people find good jobs and careers, and employers employ valuable workers. Employers are recognised as equal partners in the process supporting them from recruitment to retention. There are clear benefits for employers in working in partnership with supported employment as they will receive a free job-matching service which can help them reduce their recruitment costs and staff turnover as well as providing support to increase their confidence and understanding of how to work with people with a mental health condition, learning disability and / or autism. Further information about

supported employment can be found at <https://www.base-uk.org/about-supported-employment>

## Implementing reasonable adjustments

There is often confusion with the costs associated with employing people with a mental health condition, a learning disability and / or autism. The majority of adjustments needed when employing individuals are easy to implement and low cost. Many adjustments are about doing things a little differently. The average cost, in 2015, was found to be £75.18. Reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement and can often be funded by Access to Work. Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people and those with a long term physical or mental condition. It can provide practical and financial support where someone needs help or adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments.

**There is often the view that providing reasonable adjustments is just about removing physical barriers and providing aids and adaptations. Reasonable adjustments can be much more than this.** It can include changes to recruitment and selection processes and allowing working interviews. Jobs can be designed around the strengths of individuals ensuring that teams work effectively to each of their individual talents. Additional support can be provided by a buddy or mentor to support them developing their skills in people management. In addition, through Access to Work, you can get additional support from a job coach if this is needed.

When organisations get it right with appropriate workplace adjustment processes it can help to focus them to ensure all their employees are productive and successful at work. It will also protect them from reputational damage and the financial costs of prosecution or litigation. Organisations that are recognised for implementing fair and equal policies rather than “just saying the right thing” can find it not only supports them to gain a reputational advantage but improves the image of the organisation, making it an “employer of choice”.

## Ensuring good communication and positive interaction with disabled people

Research carried out by Scope<sup>4</sup> found that over 48% of disabled people they talked to have concerns about telling employers about their impairment or condition.<sup>5</sup> By establishing an environment where disabled staff feel able to start conversations about disability, employers will be better placed to support their staff to reach their potential. Sharing information also allows employers to gather information about the experiences of disabled staff and helps them to develop a picture of how effectively they are recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse workforce. There are a range of resources on how best to establish positive conversations with employers about their impairment.<sup>6</sup> Having a disabled staff network can also help, ensuring all

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Let-s-talk-improving-conversations-about-disability-at-work-Scope.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Scope polling of 1004 disabled adults 25–31 July 2017

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.mindfulemployer.net/files/1714/3764/4224/MINDFUL\\_EMPLOYER\\_Line\\_Managers\\_Resource\\_Revised\\_2014.pdf](http://www.mindfulemployer.net/files/1714/3764/4224/MINDFUL_EMPLOYER_Line_Managers_Resource_Revised_2014.pdf) and <http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media-centre/newsletter/members/july-2016/ey-sponsor-business-disability-forum-s-line-manager-guide-series>

staff understand the importance that this will make. It is important that there is senior commitment to the network, allowing sufficient time for disabled staff to meaningfully participate and make a difference to the organisation. Staff from the disabled staff network can have representation on other decision-making groups and having a board level champion can ensure that the voice of disabled staff is heard

### **There are a range of actions employers can take to ensure that they are successfully employing more people with a mental health condition, learning disability and / or autism.**

- **Ensure all staff understand the social model of disability** and the concept of disability equality and this is embedded in your equality and diversity policy
- **Provide disability awareness training and guidance for your staff** based on the social model of disability and the legislation
- Ensure that **appropriate recruitment training and guidance** is provided to those involved in recruitment process and in developing HR guidance
- Use a **strength-based approach to managing staff**, ensuring that you capitalise on the skills of your staff to meet your business needs
- **Review your recruitment practices** and introduce inclusive practices which includes accessible application forms and working interviews
- Consider **offering supported internships and traineeships**
- Consider **employing an apprentice** with a mental health condition, learning disability and / or autism
- **Work in partnership** with supported employment, job coaches and / or IPS services
- Give consideration to **Access to Work** at the job offer stage
- Consider and use the **Access to Work Scheme**
- Consider in-work **reasonable adjustments**
- Managers should **establish an environment** where disabled staff feel able to start conversations about disability, autism and mental health
- **Encourage the development of a network** for disabled staff and/or other mechanisms for staff to address issues positively
- Understand and consider the **local, regional and national initiatives** and programmes and **check whether your organisation is already involved** and identify how you can contribute
- Suggest and **work with others to develop an action plan** which clearly identifies the steps already being taken to employ, retain and support the progression of disabled people including people with a learning disability, a mental health condition or autistic people
- If you are an NHS employer, encourage **sign up to the Learning Disability Employment Programme** and use the resources designed to help pledged organisations If you are an NHS employer, encourage **sign up to the Learning Disability Employment Programme** and use the resources designed to help pledged organisations