



Diversity Task Force



Disability Inclusive Workplaces Quick Guide for Employers

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Disability Inclusive Workplaces

This guide covers:

- What does an inclusive workplace mean?
- What is a disability?
- What an inclusive workplace feels like for automotive people with a disability
- Why disability inclusion is good for business
- Simple things you can do now, small adjustments make a big difference
- What are the consequences of doing nothing?
- Where you can more get information, advice and support

What does an inclusive workplace mean?

An inclusive workplace is a working environment that provides intrinsic feelings of belonging, connection and community. Where everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their background.

It requires mutual respect, effective relationships, clear communication, explicit understandings about expectations and critical self-reflection.

A workplace encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion can help:

- keep employees happy and motivated
- prevent serious or legal issues arising, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination
- to better serve a diverse range of customers
- improve ideas and problem-solving
- attract and keep good staff
- make it more successful

A **disability inclusive workplace** means disabled people are supported, encouraged and valued for their skills. It means disabled employees can:

- feel confident to declare they have a disability or health condition
- freely express who they are, their own opinions, ideas and points of view
- fully participate in work, learning and social activities
- empathise with disabled customers and help make improvements to service and facilities
- raise issues and suggestions to managers
- feel safe from abuse, harassment or unfair criticism

What is a disability?

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who:

- has a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

What does 'substantial' and 'long-term' mean?

'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial, for example, it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed

'Long-term' means 12 months or more, for example, an operation that will make walking difficult for at least a year. It will still be considered to be long term if the effects are likely to come and go.

What are progressive conditions?

A progressive condition is one that gets worse over time. People with progressive conditions can be classed as disabled. However, you automatically meet the disability definition under the Equality Act 2010 from the day you're diagnosed with HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis

See more about what disability means by law, with examples, provided by [ACAS](#)

What are recurring or fluctuating conditions?

There are special rules about recurring or fluctuating conditions. See further information and common examples provided by the [Business Disability Forum](#)

What an inclusive workplace feels like for automotive people with a disability?

After years and years of discrimination, disability is seen as scary thing, so people avoid the conversation.

A disability inclusive workplace will create respect and care for colleagues to encourage anyone with a disability to declare it in the knowledge that they will receive understanding and support.

See below for personal perspectives of what an inclusive workplace feels like from automotive people with disabilities.

“A disability inclusive workplace is about knowing that having some support is not something to be embarrassed about but just evens the playing field. It’s about feeling safe sharing and knowing that people understand and want to help”

SARAH

Sparshatt Truck & Van (registered deaf)

“A disability inclusive workplace is a place where people want to take the time to learn and understand their colleagues’ particular conditions. A business that knows investing in the time to understand the disabilities and health conditions that affects its workforce is the right thing to do because it will pay off in the longer term. For me personally, receiving understanding and respect from my colleagues, and their acceptance that I have my own way of working, which might look chaotic to others, works for me.”

KAREN COLE

MCIA (neurodivergent condition)

“A disability inclusive workplace for me is where everyone is given the same respect and opportunities. It is a place where there is no assumption that you can’t do something just because you have a disability, but you are listened to, encouraged and given the opportunity to prove that you can.”

ANDY KENT

Retired Motor Mechanic & Garage Owner (wheelchair user)

“As someone who deals with having an enduring mental health condition, a disability inclusive workplace means I need people to understand that I have both good and bad days. But they know that on a good day I’m more competent than most in the work that I do. However on a bad day, I have to work twice as hard to get even the simplest of tasks done and that’s even before I step foot into the office. I might take more days off than your average worker, but I will more than make up for it when I’m in a good place with my mental health. I need to feel like they have my back when I’m unwell. Because if I feel that, it makes the process of getting better so much easier.”

DAN

SMaRT garage Front of House team, First Step Trust (mental health condition)

[Read the full personal stories](#) from automotive people on what an inclusive workplace feels like to them.

Why disability inclusion is good for business

Deloitte research shows that inclusive workplaces are **six times** more likely to be innovative and twice as likely to meet or surpass financial goals. On top of that, employees who feel able to bring their whole selves to work are **42%** less likely to plan on leaving for another position within a year. At the core, it's true that the higher the level of inclusion, the higher the level of well-being and engagement in your employees, which can lead to better business results. See more at [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)

There are clear benefits for employers, [**A systematic review of the literature on the benefits for employers of employing people with disabilities**](#), conducted on behalf of Mencap, found a number of clear benefits for employers which are listed below:

- disabled people remain in post longer, have lower absenteeism and good punctuality records
- improved and increased access to disabled customers
- improved staff relations and personnel practices
- the business is more representative of the community, fostering the public image of a fair and inclusive employer

The Mencap report published two Australian studies that looked at the savings of employing people with a disability. The results below show the saving made.

STUDY 1

Summary of comparative costs of recruitment, sickness and days off

Cost area	Performance (disabled / non-disabled)	Net saving for person with disability	Net cost for non-disabled co-worker
Length of stay in job	3.48 / 1	AUD\$23,431 (£12,281)	
Lateness episodes	3 / 20		
Absence/sickness episodes	0 / 8		AUD\$5,462 (£3,132)

Source: Citera (2009)

STUDY 2

Graffam et al. (2002a) looked at the costs of employing people with a disability compared to non-disabled employees for 643 Australian employers.

- Recruitment costs were lower at AUD\$141 vs AUD\$1079, a net saving of AUD\$938 (£538), due to reduced job turnover.
- Sickness rates were comparable at 8.3 days for employees with disabilities compared to 9.7 days for non-disabled employees but yielding net cost savings of AUD\$473 (£271).

Simple things you can do now, small adjustments make a big difference

[Read our Inclusive Workplace Top Tips](#)

Even if you are a small business and feel you do not have enough resources to draw up and see through an action plan, you can still do what you can to make a difference.

Use Inclusive Language

People with disabilities in the workplace often say they feel like they do not belong. This can come about in many ways, but one way it commonly manifests is through language. Insensitive language can lead disabled employees to feel their colleagues see them as different and not part of the team. Inclusive language is one way to prevent this from happening.

Avoid passive, victim words and use language that respects disabled people as active individuals with control over their own lives. See more information and examples on [Gov.uk](#)

Watch 'Inclusive Communication – 10 Top Tips' video from the [Business Disability Forum on YouTube](#)

End the Awkward is a Scope campaign aimed at helping people feel more comfortable about disability. The campaign uses humour to get people thinking differently. Find the video and more information on the [Scope](#) website.

Raise Awareness and Change Attitudes

Take steps to raise your own and your employees' awareness and understanding about the barriers that people with disabilities and health conditions face. This will help managers and employees to have a more confident approach to starting the conversation and supporting their colleagues and helping customers with a variety of needs and accessibility requirements.

Review your policies and consider adding a [Dignity at Work](#) policy if you don't already have one and publish internally with staff training.

There are many eLearning providers with great courses designed for workplaces for example [iHasco](#) and [eLearning at Work](#). Free eLearning can be found on [Disability Matters](#) website and also on [Free Courses in England](#) website.

Be Proactive About Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. For example:

- making changes to the workplace
- changing someone's working hours
- finding a different way to do something
- providing equipment, services or support

What is 'reasonable' depends on each situation. You must consider carefully if the adjustment will remove or reduce the disadvantage – you should talk with the person and not make assumptions.

A reasonable adjustment doesn't have to be costly and could be as simple as changing the lighting above someone's work station. If an adjustment would be expensive, the Gov.uk Access to Work scheme may help fund it. Find out about more about the [Access to Work scheme](#).

Find out more about what reasonable adjustments look like in practice on the [Equality & Human Rights Commission](#) website.

To get more tailored support to simplify and understand what reasonable adjustments might be suitable for an individual within your business, [Clear Talent](#) is an online toolkit that generates a report with recommendations on potential reasonable adjustments.

See our [Quick Employer Guide to Reasonable Adjustments](#) for further information on reasonable adjustments and further links to support.

What are the consequences of doing nothing?

Someone with a disability or a health condition in a workplace that is not encouraging inclusion may not feel able to:

- feel confident to declare they have a disability or health condition
- freely express who they are, their own opinions, ideas and points of view
- fully participate in work, learning and social activities
- raise issues and suggestions to managers
- feel safe from abuse, harassment or unfair criticism

A workplace that is not visibly and proactively disability inclusive could lead to:

- unhappy and demotivated employees
- higher staff turnover, troubles attracting and retaining staff
- serious or legal issues arising, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination
- less effectiveness in serving a diverse range of customers
- less innovation, new ideas and problem-solving
- increased costs and lack of growth

Where you can get more information and advice

[Inclusive Futures – Disability Inclusive Workplace Toolkit](#)

[Business Disability Forum – Inclusive Communication Toolkit](#)

[CIPD – Managing & Supporting Employees with Long Term Health Conditions](#)

[HSE – Talking Toolkit to support disabled workers and workers with long-term health conditions](#)

[Scope – Personal Story about Employing a Disabled Person for the First Time](#)

[Mencap - A systematic review of the literature on the benefits for employers of employing people with learning disabilities](#)

[Gov.uk – Understanding disabilities & Impairments – personal stories](#)



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