

**Making apprenticeships  
available to all**



There are a number of factors to consider make when offering apprenticeships to disabled candidates, including:

- understanding your local community and your workforce
- ensuring your recruitment and assessment processes are inclusive and accessible
- helping to ensure your organisation is visible and attractive to disabled applicants
- embedding and maintaining the highest quality workplace support for disabled staff
- understanding complex areas such as positive action and reasonable adjustments.

In this video you will see how Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (HHFT) implement their supported apprenticeship programme to support

HHFT is supporting apprenticeships for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## Understanding your local community and your workforce

What does your workforce and local community look like?

As a starting point you need to review your workforce data. Robust and accurate data is key to having a realistic understanding of gaps or challenges. It will help with:

- analysing your workforce
- identifying potential talent pools
- establishing a stronger talent pipeline.

## HR and board-level engagement

Your first step should be to communicate areas of improvement (for example increasing the number of people with a disability in your workforce) in discussion with both HR colleagues and board-level colleagues.

Both departments are key to making sure there is operational capacity and understanding alongside strategic buy-in, and that change can be effective and sustained. It's important to have HR colleagues on board when discussing the need for implementing change to an organisational approach, as they will offer support and guidance to recruiting managers. Securing buy-in from board-level colleagues around any change to

recruitment practice is a powerful tool in engaging staff across the organisation, who will see that this agenda is a strategic priority.

## Culture

Establishing and maintaining a positive work culture within an organisation underpins the positive experience of staff, and the likelihood that it's viewed as an attractive employer to those looking to join the NHS. Embedding and cascading inclusion throughout your organisation is the first step to building an inclusive culture.

The experience of disabled staff is now measured and reported on as part of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) which is legally mandated in the NHS Standard Contract. Your organisation will be measured against ten metrics specifically focused on this staff group's experiences. This includes a focus on the recruitment practices of the organisation and how inclusive they are. Ensuring that your organisational culture helps staff to feel supported, engaged and listened to will play a large part in reporting against the WDES metrics.

Individual staff and line managers can contribute to the WDES work by ensuring they have a clear understanding of your organisation's process and policy for supporting disabled staff.

## Understanding your organisations offer

We know from our research with employers across the NHS, that a key barrier to increasing the recruitment of disabled staff/those with LDD is line manager understanding – specifically what support and action to take, and the impact of prejudice and stereotyping.

As a line manager, it is vital that you understand the approach taken by the organisation with regards to the support you can offer disabled staff and those with LDD.

- Do you know who in your workplace is responsible for co-ordinating or organising workplace support for disabled staff, including reasonable adjustments?
- How to access reasonable adjustments for your staff?
- The sickness absence leave policy for staff with disabilities?
- What kinds of adjustments can be made in your work area?
- How to refer staff to occupational health?
- If your organisation has a disabled staff network?
- If your organisation is Disability Confident?
- How to apply for Access to Work funding and what it's used for?