

Key Elements of Recruitment

Job design. Design the job description and person specification. To give people an equal chance to gain employment there has to be a realistic job description. Applicants need to know what the job entails and what you are looking for. Do not be intentionally discriminatory and avoid unnecessary requirements such as asking for a driving licence because a job involves travel.

Qualifications. Breakthrough does not ask for qualifications because we recognise that disabled people have less access to education and training than other sectors of the population. Asking for qualifications, unless the job really requires them (e.g. nursing), can be a substitute for asking more appropriate questions at an interview. Be as basic and as realistic as you can be.

Advertise in the disability press, talking newspapers, mailing lists of disabled people's organisations and the mainstream press. For example:

- Disability Now
- Guardian
- Ceefax (pages for Deaf people)

Try to briefly state your policy and give positive messages, for example Breakthrough states on job adverts that that over 60% of staff are disabled people. In the advertisement describe the different formats that recruitment packs are available in, e.g. email, tape etc.

Reasonable Adjustments: The question that is always asked is "*What are Reasonable Adjustments?*" Ultimately it may be up to tribunals to decide.

The size of the organisation and financial resources available are important in deciding what is reasonable e.g. McDonalds would be expected to provide more accessibility in comparison with a corner café. It also depends on the difference that removing a disabling barrier makes for the potential employee, i.e. how effective the adjustment is likely to be.

Reasonable adjustments at the interview: This is mostly about practicality. The person applying is the expert on their requirements. The important thing is to ask on the application form what adjustments would be required if invited for interview.

Variety of forms: Breakthrough tends to receive applications on paper form or by email. If these don't work for the applicant we will look at other formats i.e. large print, tape, etc. Ask on the form if the applicant is a disabled person and what reasonable adjustments can be put in place. Bear in mind that adjustments are not necessarily static – they can change over time.

Shortlisting – be realistic: Stick to the agreed requirements and criteria. Don't be tempted to make assumptions about capabilities based on impairment.

Application forms at Breakthrough are made anonymous to make it as fair as possible, for example by taking off the top sheet with people's names on so that the people shortlisting do not know the person's ethnicity, gender etc. Be self-monitoring as a company.

Interview: We ask applicants about access details and reasonable adjustments, giving examples such as room layout and lighting. **The key thing is to ask.** Make sure all information and documents are accessible. This includes any presentations or exercises. If assessments are done at interview it is a good idea to give advance warning of the type of exercise required so that the candidate can advise on any possible adjustments needed.

Offer decision: Check access and reasonable adjustments with your new staff member. Access to Work should be contacted within six weeks of a job starting then you won't have any financial cost. As Access to Work can be slow, it is a good idea for the new employee to get in touch with them as soon as a start date is given (see below for more information).

Think about buildings, workspace and public areas, car parks and corridors. Breakthrough's building, the Business Employment Venture Centre, is fully accessible. A listed building with a lot of stairs is not as easy.

Starting Work

Induction: Provide information such as policies in an appropriate format. Some people may need more time to read things.

Employed: Some people's requirements may not change. Some will fluctuate and adaptations may have to be altered. All you need to do is ask. Communication is the key.

Supervision and Management

- Working environment
- Health & Safety / Risk Assessment
- Performance & Appraisal
- Promotion and Career Development
- Letting people go

Look at the working environment, for example space available, height of furniture.

I.T. equipment, noise levels, light and communal areas must all be accessible. This may or may not be costly.

Health & Safety / Risk Assessment: In the working environment hazards must be checked and access must be checked. This applies to all staff, whether disabled or not, and is simply good management practice.

Check things like access to/in the building and egress (how to get out). What are the hazards? Be systematic and flexible. Keep in touch and ask.

For funding for workplace adaptations, travel and support costs, the employee can apply to Access to Work (ATW). ATW is a very useful support, although people sometimes complain that they are not quick enough. We have a factsheet available on ATW which explains the scheme more fully.

Check the Disability Rights Commission website (www.drc-gb.org) and Business Link (www.businesslink.gov.uk), they have good advice.

Poor performance: Check to see if reasonable adjustments have been made and that the staff member agrees that they have. Once this factor is eliminated, if there is still poor performance then follow company policy and procedures. As long as you have dealt with impairment issues then the staff member must be expected to do the job.

Sickness: If there is a high absence rate check reasonable adjustments and ask people if their access requirements are being met. If absence is related to the person's impairment (**very important**) re-assess reasonable adjustments, and work with the staff member to eliminate problems. If not, you may well find yourself on the wrong side of the law. Revise policies as required and re-assess reasonable adjustments built into existing structures.

Promotion and Career Development: Successful employers will encourage promotion and career development. All such processes must be made as available to disabled staff as to others.

Summary

- Recruitment
- Reasonable adjustments
- Supervision and Management

“At the end of the day I don’t believe employing disabled people is any harder. Be informed, be systematic. Don’t do one thing with one person and not with another”.
Lorraine Gradwell, Chief Executive, Breakthrough UK Ltd.

Set up procedures. Breakthrough reviews each of our policies on a two yearly basis. Make changes as necessary.

This booklet is based on a workshop led by Lorraine Gradwell at our 2005 Business Inclusion Conference. It was produced by the Independent Employment Advocacy Centre at Breakthrough UK Ltd. For more information, contact us on:

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