

Some time ago, over 2 days, we asked disabled people working with or for Breakthrough UK what key messages they would like to give to employers. Four key themes emerged. We have since gone back to disabled people we are in contact with and asked if they have anything to add or change. The responses below are very consistent but cannot be taken to be representative of the opinions of all disabled people. Many thanks to all who contributed:

- 1. Don't make assumptions about disabled people's skills and capabilities and be particularly careful to avoid negative stereotyping. Always ask the person what their requirements are.**
- 2. Disabled people are a valuable and dedicated asset.**
- 3. Making appropriate adjustments is often a case of doing things a bit differently and thinking laterally rather than spending lots of money.**
- 4. Be aware of, and use, the support networks available, especially the government's Access to Work scheme.**

Quotes received from disabled people included:

"It would be great if employers were aware of and avoided the stereotypical assumptions and misconceptions that commonly surround disability in relation to employment."

"We want employers to create a workplace culture where disabled people are treated with equal respect and can be comfortable communicating their requirements without fear of the consequences."

"Employers should not make assumptions about disabled people's capabilities without talking to them first. If they do ask them, employers tend to focus on the medical condition rather than taking into account what a prospective employee may already have achieved in their life."

"Employers wrongly assume that someone with a particular impairment will have certain access requirements which may be costly and time consuming. Not every disabled person needs specialist equipment, often it is just a case of working in a different way."

"Employers need to look at their attitude towards disabled people as well as just the physical and practical issues."

"It is important for employers to know that disabled people can sustain and enter the labour market like their counterparts and fulfil the requirements of the post."

"Disabled people want to work and provide commitment to the company just as much, if not more than, a non-disabled person would."

"A lot of employers seem to be unaware that Access to Work can help towards the costs of equipment, travel costs and interpreters and can advise on making a workplace more accessible to a disabled person."

“Employers should be willing to provide additional support and reasonable adjustments when needed and appropriate.”

“Employers need to know, understand and implement the basic provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (now Equality Act). There is support available with this.”

“We want employers to know that they are employing an individual, not ‘the disability’ or ‘the impairment’.”

“We want the things we can do well to carry more weight than some things we cannot do, or do differently!”

“Employers should provide training on disability (and know what kind of training works best).”

“Employers need to understand that there are both visible and invisible impairments”

“There are lots of employers who are successfully employing disabled people and have not gone bankrupt. They realise that disabled people are a valuable and dedicated asset.”

“Many disabled people would not wish to be ‘helped’ or treated uniquely from others - the person’s own skills and ability should qualify them as it would anyone else.”

“Support needs to be within the workplace and the person should not feel they are being a burden by requiring this support. Obviously performance is an issue but this will be achieved and excelled in the right circumstances.”

“Disabled people with mental health issues have a lot to offer the world and society and need a voice and a commitment from employers to give them a helping hand into a full career.”

“Employers need to understand how society disables people and think about their role in removing barriers that stop disabled people from progressing at work.”

“I am capable of doing the job I am applying for.”

“Let me prove I can do the job.”

“My disability does not prevent me from doing the job.”

“I will be a valuable member of your workforce”

“Don't make assumptions about what a disabled person can't do. To negatively define is to negatively confine. To exclude. To disable. To discriminate.”

For more information on good practice in the employment of disabled people, contact the Independent Employment Advocacy Centre on:

Tel: **0161 273 5412**

Answerphone Minicom: **0161 273 5727**

Email: **advocacy@breakthrough-uk.co.uk**

More resources are available online at **www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk/Resources**