

I care...

Recruitment and retention of disabled people in adult social care



Skills for Care has undertaken a project in co-production with Disability Rights UK and the British Association of Supported Employment to look at the recruitment, retention and progression of disabled people within the social care sector.

What do we mean by disabled?

In line with the Equality Act 2010 we are using disabled to mean having a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on ability to do normal daily activities.

In practice, it is not the impairment that counts, but how it impacts on the person and their abilities.

Why employ disabled people?

As demand for social care workers continues to grow employers wanting to attract and retain the best possible staff will need to identify and access as wide a talent pool as possible.

Disabled workers represent only 2% of the current social care workforce, yet there is plenty of evidence that employing disabled workers is good for business. Particular benefits that organisations associate with employing disabled workers include:

- **improved services** - disabled workers can apply personal experience and insight to service design helping ensure services meet the needs of disabled people
- **personal qualities** - employers recognised that managing conditions could help individuals develop qualities and skills that were valuable in the workplace
- **boost to workplace morale** - existing and prospective staff see that the organisation cares about an individual's potential and is committed to supporting them which can improve staff morale and lead to reduced staff turnover
- **cultural change** - demonstrating value based, effective employment models can help promote cultural change
- **improved public perceptions** - being seen as an 'inclusive' organisation can improve public regard and lead to increased uptake of services
- **strengthened work teams** - more diversity within the staff team increases the overall knowledge and awareness of workforce enriching team performance
- **job loyalty** - many disabled workers have had to overcome significant barriers to enter the job market and have developed a strong work ethic, commitment to succeed and job loyalty
- **reduced costs** - employers who have recruited disabled workers through specialist employment services also report reduced recruitment costs and a lessening of the administrative burden associated with selecting staff

Many organisations recognise these potential benefits and are keen to recruit disabled employees but find it difficult to put this into practice. Identifying likely barriers within the recruitment process along with a flexible approach can help.

What are the barriers?

People told us that many recruitment systems were inflexible and did not suit the needs of disabled people. They raised concerns about how jobs were defined and advertised, and highlighted unsuitable and inaccessible application forms and inappropriate interview processes. People also told us how the way workplaces were organised and managed could impact on both the recruitment and retention of disabled workers.

Our contributors recognised that employer's will get the best out of each of their employees by treating them as individuals, understanding their strengths and potential. They were also able to suggest a range of measures that would support the recruitment and retention of disabled workers and could be effectively incorporated into general systems. This information is incorporated in the report *If only my employer and I had known* which is available at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/recruitment along with other resources developed during the project.

These include:

- **Top tips** - some suggestions to help employers wishing to recruit and retain disabled workers.
- **Case studies** provided by disabled people
- **Examples of good practice** provided by organisations and employers



Other support for employers

Supported employment is an evidence-based approach to securing sustainable jobs for people with a disability. It is an internationally recognised model of individual employment support that regards both employers and disabled jobseekers as its customers.

Supported employment is one of the most effective ways of supporting people with substantial disabilities into work. Its key features are:

- comprehensive vocational profiles which are completed with the jobseeker
- a clear process of engaging with employers
- thorough analysis of the job content
- an accurate job match that puts the right worker in the right job
- on-going support, such as job coaching, for both employer and employee.

Supported employment services are usually locally funded. You can find out more, including details of your nearest providers at <http://base-uk.org>

Where else can I get help?

The government has specific programmes to support employers to recruit and retain disabled workers. These include:

- **Work Choice** - a national programme that supports people with disabilities and long-term health conditions into employment
- **Access to Work** - a scheme that funds support for disabled workers and can contribute to the cost of reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Information about these schemes is available through the disability employment advisor at local Jobcentres.

Further information

You can find a wealth of information to help you to recruit and retain disabled employees. The following websites can signpost you to suitable resources:

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/recruitment

<http://base-uk.org/employers>

www.realising-potential.org

www.hse.gov.uk/stress

www.shift.org.uk

www.time-to-change.org.uk

www.disabilityrightsuk.org