



Recruitment & Retention Findings

Disability Employment Gap



backdrop

The purpose of this research report was to evidence the challenges, benefits and outcomes from an employer's perspective when it comes to the retention of disabled people. The forecasted target audience was business owners and HR managers and the proposed methodology was one-to-one interviews through an extensive employer network.

The breakdown of activity undertaken can be summarised as follows:

Telephone calls:	81
One-to-one interviews:	42
No history of employing disabled people:	23
No response:	16

Feedback from one-to-one interviews:

- **Self-employed HR professional:**
 - Out of 11 clients, only 1 client employed someone with a disability.
- **Construction Firm owner:**
 - Employed someone in a wheelchair and spent circa £20k on adjustments to the workplace. Employer was not aware of any available support.
- **Recruitment Provider:**
 - Workforce of 18 employees, but organisation had only ever recruited one disabled person and offered their reason for leaving as performance related.
- **Care Provider:**
 - Out of 350 employees, only 7 had a disability (2%).
- **Retail Provider:**
 - Out of 130 employees, only 8 had a disability (6%).
- **Hospitality Recruitment Provider:**
 - 156 employees, none had a disability.
- **Health and Safety Provider:**
 - Out of 30 employees, only 1 had a disability (3%).
 - Employer indicated that they incurred additional costs due to an upgraded laptop and advanced Microsoft security, but were not aware of any financial support available for these types of adjustments.
- **Recruitment Provider:**
 - Out of 62 employees over 4 locations, only 1 person had a disability (2%).
- **Health Provider:**
 - 105,000 employees worldwide, but no statistical analysis available re: recruitment levels of disabled people currently/previously employed.
 - Employer highlighted that disabled people assumed low paid roles within the organisation, i.e. mailroom, admin.

These findings highlight the challenges associated with research conducted through employer interviews in order to understand the issues around the retention of disabled employees. The employers approached either did not consider employing disabled people or were unable/unwilling to disclose any reasons attributed to the employment coming to an end.

With this in mind, desktop research was then undertaken to accompany the anecdotal evidence provided through employer interviews, with the results as follows:

- The DWP Work, Health and Disability green paper: data pack (2018), highlights that Disabled individuals in employment were more likely to fall out of work than non-disabled individuals. (5.4% of disabled individuals in employment in Q1 were out of work by the next, compared to 2.5% of non-disabled individuals in employment).
- In addition, the Scottish Government labour market flows analysis: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/disabled-people-labour-market-scotland-2018/>, confirms that in 2018, disabled people were almost twice as likely to move out of work compared to non-disabled people.
- Labour market flows analysis shows there has been an increase in the proportion of disabled people who have fallen out of work over the latest year but a fall from the baseline year.
- Over the last year, the proportion of disabled people in employment who have fallen out of work has increased – from 8.2% in 2016/17, to 10.0% in 2017/18 (although it also increased for non-disabled people – from 4.9% to 5.5%). Disabled people remain generally around twice as likely to fall out of work as non-disabled people (10.0% vs 5.5%).
- In 2018, average pay for disabled employees in Scotland was 8.3% lower than non-disabled employees. This means for every £1 that a non-disabled employee earned in 2018, a disabled employee earned £0.92. ONS, Disability Pay Gaps in the UK: 2018

table 1 - Scottish Government Analysis of Labour Market Flows based on the Annual Population Survey



	2015/16 Baseline	2016/17	2017/18	Progress over the latest year
Proportion of disabled people moving from employment to not working	13.5%	8.2%	10.0%	

table 2 - ONS, Disability Pay Gaps in the UK: 2018

	2016 Baseline	2017	2018	Progress over the latest year
Disability Pay Gap	13.8%	13.3%	8.3%	

- In April-June 2020, 7.7 million people of working age (16-64) in the UK reported they were disabled (19% of the population) ([House of Commons Library - Briefing Paper, 2020](#)), yet in 2018/19, Access to Work provision was only approved for 32,000 people in the UK. Access to Work provides support to meet the needs of disabled people in the workplace. Grants are available to both employees and to the self-employed and aim to provide practical and financial support to help disabled people find or stay in work. This provision included elements such as: Communication support for interviews; Special aids and equipment; Adaptations to premises and vehicles; Help with travel costs; Support workers; A mental health support service ([DWP, Access to Work Statistics, 2020](#)).
- [The Centre for Social Justice \(2017\)](#) highlight the following challenges faced by disabled people entering and sustaining their position within the world of work:
 - Just 25% of employers know what Access to Work is and understand the help they can get from this service.
 - Only 9% of employers think there is usually a strong business case for hiring a disabled person.
 - 83% of disabled people acquire their disabilities while they are in work.
 - Around 300,000 people a year fall out of work due to health conditions - early intervention is key and return-to-work programmes are more likely to succeed when implemented early.
 - As susceptibility to disability increases with age, and our workforce continues to get older, more people will develop disabilities while working and risk losing their jobs.
 - Only 45% of employers understand clearly what it means to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people under the Equality Act 2010.
 - 31% of employers see the cost of making reasonable adjustments as a barrier to hiring disabled people.
 - If most of the 300,000 people who fall out of work each year due to ill health keep their jobs, and the jobless disabled people who want to work find employment, we could halve the disability employment gap.

- In addition to this, employment specialists [Reed in Partnership, supported by leading charity Disability Rights UK](#), highlight the following:
 - The biggest challenge to employing disabled people is that applicants are not always willing to be open about their disability.
 - Other key challenges to increasing the number of disabled people in work include fellow staff or line managers not having sufficient training to support disabled colleagues, and the lack of accessibility of some businesses for people with certain types of impairments.
 - Almost one in ten (9%) respondents said their business is not able to support an employee with a disability or health condition.
 - The vast majority (84%) of respondents told us that disabled people make a valuable contribution to the workplace, however more than one in ten (12%) worry that disabled people are more likely to take time off work.
 - Around a quarter (26%) of respondents said it was challenging to discuss the management of disabilities. 19% of respondents consider that the cost of modifying equipment makes it expensive to employ disabled people, and almost half (49%) of respondents said that additional funding for adaptations would help businesses to retain disabled people in employment.
 - Almost a third (31%) said that businesses are worried that disabled people will claim discrimination if the job does not work out.
 - Lack of confidence amongst some employers about how to employ disabled people, make workplace adjustments and make use of government support like the Access to Work programme. This can lead to disabled people being overlooked for jobs or leaving the workforce unnecessarily if they develop an impairment during working life.

This research identifies a number of areas that employers consider as barriers to successfully retain and develop disabled employees. In order to address these, the following actions should be considered as priorities:

- Address the myths associated with recruiting and retaining disabled employees.
- Deliver the support employers need to have the skills and confidence to successfully retain more disabled people, including the “fear” of saying and doing the “wrong thing”
- Increase the support available to employers at various employment milestone periods.
- Increase employer awareness about the types of support that is available to them.
- Increase employer awareness around implementing reasonable adjustments.
- Improve the communication flow between employers and disabled employees.
- Increase employer awareness re: the benefits of retaining disabled employees

