

# Employing disabled workers in adult social care and health

## Busting the myths



By thinking and  
acting differently you  
could find your next  
perfect hire



## Widen your talent pool

Finding people with the right values is key to high quality care and support.

3.4 million disabled people are currently working in the UK, with millions more who want the opportunity to work and have valuable skills and experience to offer, but many still find it difficult to find employment.

Disabled friendly policies aren't just about recruiting new workers, they should support existing ones too. 83% of disabled people acquire their disability or long term health condition during their working life, so anyone could be affected.

It's vital that every employer does more to support and encourage a more diverse workforce into adult social care and health roles, and support people to stay and progress.

## Supporting disability and employment: why?

Encouraging disabled people to apply for roles and ensuring you have the right support in place will help you maximise your recruitment and retention efforts.

Actively targeting and recruiting disabled people will:

- increase the quality of applicants with lived and diverse experiences
- promote diversity in the workplace
- improve services for people who need care and support
- lead to a workplace that better reflects the community you serve.



## Busting the myths: employing disabled workers

There are lots of myths about employing disabled people.

Some employers worry about 'getting it wrong'. Some are fearful of the perceived cost, whilst others may have the perception that disabled people can't perform the job.

The truth is that many disabled people have lots to offer the adult social care and health workforce.

It's important that employers acknowledge that these are myths so they can find more workers with the right values for our sector, avoid discrimination and change their workplace culture.







# **Myth: Disabled people have a higher absentee rate than their colleagues**

**Fact:** Studies show that on average disabled workers have lower absence rates than their colleagues. Absenteeism is a subject that line managers must address with all workers and clear guidance is available.

Stephen has autism and works in the kitchen at Chartwells. His employer says:

**“What I like about Stephen is that he doesn’t let us down, he’s always punctual. Stephen is a very loyal employee and has got a good attendance record, and in fact I cannot remember him ever having a day off.”**

## Tips

Ensure you have effective people management processes in place that include absenteeism.

Make use of employer forums for networking and support.

Make sure managers have training to help them support teams effectively.

Make sure you have fair, disability related leave policies in place for disabled workers.

## More information to help

Managing staff absence, ACAS

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
managingabsence](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/managingabsence)**

People Performance Management toolkit, Skills for Care

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PPMT](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PPMT)**



# **Myth: If I employ a disabled worker, someone will always have to help them**

**Fact:** A good induction and support programme is crucial, especially in the first few months.

With dedicated training and support, as with all workers, many disabled workers adjust to their job role and their disability does not affect their ability to work unaided.

**“Stephen very much has a routine and is very particular in the way he works. I give him a job to do... I don’t have to go back and check.”**



## Tips

Ensure workers have a thorough induction and have clear responsibilities.

Introduce mentors or buddies for new workers.

Contact your local job coach or supported employment services to support disabled people into work.

## More information to help

Access to Work grant, DWP

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
accesstowork](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/accesstowork)**

Supported internships, DWP

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
supportedinternships](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/supportedinternships)**

British Association for Supported  
Employment

**[www.base-uk.org](http://www.base-uk.org)**

Remploy

**[www.remploy.co.uk](http://www.remploy.co.uk)**



## Tips

Where possible, match care workers with people who have similar interests, personalities and values.

Encourage workers to be open about their disabilities and promote discussions about disability between workers and people who need care and support.

Ensure your workforce reflects the diversity of the local community you serve.

## More information to help

Get out and get active

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/special-projects/get-out-get-active](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/special-projects/get-out-get-active)

Peer support, Disability Rights

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/peer-modelling](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/peer-modelling)

# Myth: I can't fire or discipline an employee with a disability

**Fact:** While there are laws in place, such as the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act that serve to protect the rights of all workers, there are no special procedures for firing or disciplining disabled workers.

All employers should have fair and equitable procedures in place for all workers.

Philip is a project coordinator for Sight Service 1, and lost his eyesight at a young age. He says:

**“Equality means having systems in place which really create a level playing field.”**



## Tips

Make sure you establish clear and mutual expectations from the start. Openly discuss abilities and support against job requirements at interview.

Have people management processes in place.

Discuss any issues with workers and look for solutions.

Develop confident managers who apply correct procedures fairly.

## More information to help

Equality Act 2010: guidance, DWP  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/equalityact](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/equalityact)

People Performance Management toolkit, Skills for Care  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PPMT](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PPMT)

ACAS code of conduct on disciplinary and grievance  
[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

**Myth: Social care and health workers need to be physically strong with good mobility**

## Tips

Every candidate is unique; think about the abilities of the individual. Recruit people into roles matched or carved to their abilities.

Review your interviewing process to include questions that ask about values, behaviours and abilities rather than limitations.

## More information to help

Preventing discrimination in recruitment, DWP

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
preventingdiscrimination](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/preventingdiscrimination)**

Recruiting for values in social care toolkit

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values)**  
Values based recruitment toolkit in health care

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
healthvalues](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/healthvalues)**



# Myth: Disabled workers are sensitive and I don't want to say the wrong thing

**Fact:** All workers, including disabled people are unique and you shouldn't presume they'll act in a certain way.

You're not expected to be an expert. Most disabled people are happy to have an open and honest conversation. If an applicant declares a disability determine together what, if any, support they might need.

It's important to be willing to learn and adapt, and show all your workers that you're willing to support them.



## Tips

Ask questions that relate to the working environment.

Don't presume that disabled workers can't do a particular task.

Don't categorise people into disability 'types'.

Contact expert disability groups who might offer support and training.

## More information to help

An A-Z guide on disabilities

[Workplace Health and Safety](#)

[Workplace Health and Safety](#)

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# Myth: Disabled people are work shy and lazy

**Fact:** 3.4 million disabled people are now in work – an increase of half a million over the past three years.

According to the Labour Force Study, disabled people are now more likely to be employed than in 2002. Adult social care and health employers need to adapt so they can better support and motivate disabled workers.

Philip works as a project coordinator with Sight Service 1 who have helped over 30 people with sight loss get into work. He says:

**“There are so many talented workers and it gives us great satisfaction to see them achieve the opportunities they deserve.”**

## Tips

Ensure you support all workers so they feel confident and motivated in their role.

Provide regular supervision and appraisal to keep a two way conversation with workers.

Offer volunteering or work experience to see if people are right for the job before offering full time employment.

## More information to help

Effective supervision, Skills for Care

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
supervision](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/supervision)**

*I Care...Ambassadors*

**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
icareambassadors](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/icareambassadors)**

Inspiring the future

**[www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org)**

## Let's summarise

There are over seven million people of working age who have declared a disability, many of whom want to work.

That's a huge pool of talent if you're looking for people with the right values, behaviours and attitudes to work in adult social care and health.

Remember not all disabilities are visible, and they don't necessarily affect a person's ability to work.



Statistically you are likely to already, or will in the future, employ people with a disability or long term health condition.

**7 million**

people of working age have declared a disability

**1 in 4**

people will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year

**1 in 6**

people live with some sort of hearing loss

**1.87 million**

people live with sight loss

It's vital that you have the right support in place to recruit, retain and progress your talent.

## **Useful links and resources**

Clear kit – recruiting and retaining disabled talent

[\*\*www.clearkit.co.uk\*\*](http://www.clearkit.co.uk)

Disability and employment: a guide for adult social care and health employers

[\*\*www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
disabilityandemployment\*\*](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/disabilityandemployment)

Disability Rights UK

[\*\*www.disabilityrightsuk.org\*\*](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

Employing disabled people and people with a health condition, DWP

[\*\*www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
disabilityandemployment\*\*](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/disabilityandemployment)

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V O D

Nhs

Health Education England