

Improving Disability Diversity at Board and Senior Leadership Level Emerging Themes & Recommendations

Themes	Challenges and Barriers to Employing Disabled People and Improving Representation	Recommendations
Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 22% of UK population consider themselves disabled ▪ 18.6% of the working age population is disabled. ▪ Employment rate of disabled people is 51.3% compared to 81.4% for non-disabled people. ▪ There are more disabled women than men ▪ Proportion of disabled people with no qualifications is three times that of non disabled people ▪ 24% employers are less likely to employ someone with a disability ▪ Limited numbers on Boards and senior leadership positions ▪ Limited advice for organisations and sectors for tackling the problem 	<p>Supporting society and employers to understand the impact of impairments and experiences of disabled people in the workplace</p> <p>Promoting practices to employers, organisations and sectors that improve the experiences and career advancement of disabled people.</p> <p>Supporting employers to promote diverse organisations and cultivate a broad spectrum of attributes and characteristics. Employing disabled people in senior leadership/on boards to apply their lived experiences.</p> <p>Take into account the intersectional invisibility faced by different groups and manage it as if it were a 'protected characteristic'.</p>
Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Three in four people believe there is some level of prejudice towards disabled people in Britain ▪ Disabled people seen as less productive 	<p>Organisations need to explore attitudes towards disabled people and consider unconscious bias</p> <p>Employers need to provide services and work environments and ensure employee needs are fully taken into account</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Society's reactions are disabling not the impairment itself ▪ Misplaced focus by employers on functional limitations or psychological losses 	<p>Focus on how diversity contributes to organisational performance, how difference can enhance an organisation's work and strengthen governance.</p> <p>Mixed teams are more representative of customers, offer a variety of viewpoints, wider experiences and improve decision making and problem solving</p>
<p>Improving representation including at senior leadership and Board level</p>	<p>Lack of visibility and representation of disabled people in organisations at senior leadership and at Board level.</p> <p>7% of executives reported having an impairment in C-suite survey and the Valuable 500</p> <p>56% executives: topic of disability never comes up on leadership agendas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only 5% board members of funded sports organisations consider themselves disabled compared to 22% in the wider UK population. 	<p>Have senior leadership speaking about disability experience</p> <p>Have leaders speaking to family members with lived experience</p> <p>Disability performance and reporting to be equally included on the D&I agenda- needs to be recognised as an equally strategic driver to business like other inclusion agendas.</p> <p>BBC workforce report suggests introducing a disability leadership and workforce target of 12% by 2022.</p> <p>Improving disability diversity starts with organisational culture and ethos and runs through to the recruitment process and working environments.</p>
<p>Recruitment</p>	<p>Job adverts do not reach a diverse audience</p> <p>Recruitment processes are not adjusted to meet the needs of disabled people</p>	<p>Organisations need to follow inclusive processes for recruiting disabled people and disabled senior leaders.</p>

Inaccessible recruitment packs cited as major barrier to disabled people in being appointed and progressing to senior leadership.

Organisations avoid having conversations they consider difficult and miss the opportunity to fully engage applicants who have disclosed their disability in the recruitment process.

The disability sector is considered by some to have the most inclusive recruitment and retention practices.

Recruitment packs need to show commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion beyond an 'equal opportunity statement'.

Advertise on multiple platforms and on disability specific websites and consider the barriers that exist for disabled people accessing adverts. Explore networks, organisations and website outside of your traditional recruitment channels.

Consideration needs to be given to the application portal for forms/CV process and the impact on e.g. visually impaired applicants.

Ask candidates directly if they require adjustments throughout the recruitment process. Guidance and information available from Equality and Human Rights Commission and the BDF.

All organisations and sectors should be practicing inclusive recruitment and retention. HR departments need to know and lead on access to work and how to support a disabled employee in an application.

Show your commitment to employing disabled people by signing up to the Disability confident scheme. Find ways of displaying a 'positive about disabled people image'.

Board appointments: review person specification criteria e.g. place more emphasis on the importance of lived experience and experiential knowledge.

		Organisations need to build a strategy (such as SCOPE) to improve disability diversity and well-being of staff, as well as reporting on their disability diversity figures, including pay.
Workplace adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employees report lack of disabled employees in offices and access to the office being limited. ▪ Misconception of disability being limited to physical factors only ▪ Business leaders are apprehensive about employing a disabled person to the senior leadership team ▪ Costs of workplace adjustments was sighted as a reason. 66% of organisations see this as barrier. 	<p>Equality Act requires employers to provide reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people are not disadvantaged at work.</p> <p>Access to work scheme can pay 100 per cent of costs if applied for in first six weeks.</p> <p>ATW scheme offers support and grants to cover practical support in workplace not covered by reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>Organisations need to commit to putting disability inclusion on their leadership agendas. Review and development of policies to better support disabled people.</p> <p>Having an open and accessible environment should be viewed as a business imperative.</p> <p>Creating positive working environments has clear benefits for disabled people- provides flexible working approaches and an inclusive culture.</p>
Supporting independence and inclusion of disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barriers in workplace makes it difficult for disabled people ▪ Lack of understanding about impact of the impairment/disability 	<p>Understand and tackle the barriers that exist</p> <p>Produce Individual employee plans to understand specific barriers and challenges and how to address these. Focus on employee's particular contributions and competencies.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 41% business leaders worried that disabled people would take a lot of sick leave. ▪ Also that disabled people could not cope with the high stress involved with executive life and their capabilities might not be enough. ▪ Some questioned the benefits of employing a disabled person ▪ Lack of data on pay gap and other data- this is required to explore and raise awareness of disability discrimination in the workplace. 	<p>Disability awareness training for all relevant employees, senior leaders and Board members.</p> <p>Unconscious bias training for Boards and senior leaders- how to be aware of and overcome unconscious bias.</p> <p>Creating disability awareness modules for employees and a guide for line managers, such as that proposed by Virgin Media.</p> <p>Use Government and Scope advice to report on disabled staff numbers and the disability pay gap.</p>
<p>Career progression</p>	<p>Disabled people are under represented at senior leadership and Board level.</p> <p>Improving accessibility is key to supporting career progression. Disabled people and managers have difficulty accessing offices and other sites.</p> <p>The key is developing talent not just accommodating impairments and making adjustments -Disability Rights UK. Disabled people do not get the right support to enable career to progress thus preventing them from climbing the leadership ladder.</p>	<p>Disabled people need to find other team members with similar lived experience.</p> <p>Disclose their lived experience of culture</p> <p>Set up employee resource group and get executive sponsorship</p> <p>Visibility of senior disabled staff is key in projecting a disability friendly organisation and providing role models to applicants.</p> <p>Access to work provides vital support for disabled people in the workplace.</p> <p>Importance of senior management support throughout an individual's career and mentoring opportunities.</p>

	<p>Disabled people find it more difficult to obtain mentoring or related leadership development support than non-disabled people.</p> <p>Board meetings and documents are not accessible to disabled people and need to be sent out with ample time for reading.</p> <p>Expectations of role and contribution unclear</p>	<p>Develop internal and external peer- peer support networks and mentoring, advocacy and sponsorship schemes.</p> <p>Supporting disabled people to identify and complete educational opportunities as part of their professional development.</p> <p>Personal Development Programme and Career Development Programme to support career progression and ensure support from line managers and senior leaders. Internal Support, development and networking opportunities such as those offered by Lloyds Bank's 'Access Network'.</p> <p>Use of Assistive Technology (AT) solutions (such as those researched by Inclusive Tech Alliance) can help support disabled people and organisations to confront some of the barriers to leadership progression. AT has the potential for transformative impact on disability diversity at senior level and represents huge opportunity to revolutionise disabled people's experiences in the workplace.</p> <p>Ensure Board materials are in an accessible format and circulated in advance.</p> <p>Skills audit of Board to raise expectations of what disabled Board members can achieve and identify skills shortages on Boards.</p> <p>Avoid tokenism and appointments as a box ticking exercise. Disabled people need to be valued for their skills and experiences and appointed on basis of this.</p>
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Research & UK Disability Landscape	<p>Disability is under reported in existing research on Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace e.g senior leadership and Board appointments.</p>	<p>Need to tackle the lack of disability diversity amongst senior leaders with similar enthusiasm to other diversity agenda strands.</p> <p>Commission more research in this area.</p>
Government Policy	<p>Cross government strategy, supporting the life chances of disabled people (2005): Objective: 'disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life, and will be respected and included as equal members of society.'</p> <p>The Strategy is based on four key areas: Supporting independent living, Improving support to families of disabled children, Supporting a smooth transition into adult hood and Improving support and incentives for attaining and maintaining employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government to clarify impact of remuneration packages on benefits ▪ Government to review ways to increase educational opportunities for disabled people ▪ Government to clarify the legal situation regarding the provision of reasonable adjustments to volunteers.

	<p>Submission of evidence comments indicated the need for government action to tackle the issues surrounding the representation of disabled people in senior leadership positions.</p> <p>The Disability Confident Scheme- aims to improve employment and recruitment practices for disabled people.</p> <p>11,262 employers are signed up however 18% of 'confident leaders' do not employ disabled people.</p> <p>Limited workforce data exists regarding disabled people</p>	<p>Review of Disability Confident Scheme required</p> <p>Organisations to use the Government's voluntary reporting framework on disability, mental health and well-being.</p> <p>Need to drive culture change required to build a more inclusive society.</p>
<p>Monitoring job outcomes</p>	<p>Disability Confident Scheme- recognised as supporting disability inclusion. More information is needed to assess whether programme leads to changes in business practices that increase the recruitment and retention of disabled people</p>	<p>The Disability confident scheme to consider reporting on job outcomes of the commitments made as part of the accreditation.</p> <p>Scheme can be expanded and strengthened to ensure it acts as a recognised quality standard for people seeking jobs in disability inclusive organisations.</p>