News, views and tips

Contact Us

Five free workplace adjustments to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2022

December 3 each year is International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
One of three themes relating to the overarching topic is 'innovation for disability-inclusive development in employment.'
It's a topic that's close to our hearts at ClearTalents.
We've listed five free workplace adjustments to empower your staff to bring their authentic selves to work.

Read more

5 FREE workplace adjustments to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 3 each year is International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The theme for 2022 is 'Transformative Solutions for Inclusive Development, the role of innovation in fuelling an equitable world.'

One of three themes relating to the overarching topic is 'innovation for disability-inclusive development in employment.' It's a topic that's close to our hearts at ClearTalents.

Our Inclusion Passport empowers a more equitable workforce by enabling employees to disclose impairments, long-term conditions and circumstances that may act as a barrier to work.

Once disclosed, we're able to recommend reasonable adjustments which enable your staff to bring their best selves to work.

How many people of working age are disabled?
In the UK, 7.5 million people of working age are disabled or have a long-term condition, according to Leonard Cheshire), which equates to one in 5 people.

Despite this, there is a disability employment gap.

Just half of disabled people are employed (51.3%) compared to 8 in 10 non-disabled people, says Leonard Cheshire.

The benefits of embracing a diverse workforce
There are economic benefits to decreasing the disability pay gap. The Equality and Human Rights Commission indicates that raising the participation of disabled people could reduce the annual £100 billion cost of people being out of work.

Likewise, a report by Accenture identified so-called Inclusion Champions and found that they were two times more likely to outperform their peers in terms of total shareholder returns.

Five workplace adjustments that are completely free
The cost of workplace adjustments is a barrier to employing disabled people, with 66% of employers saying the cost of adjustments is a barrier. However, reasonable adjustments don't need to be expensive.

We've identified five simple adjustments that won't cost you a penny.

1. Include an agenda with a meeting invite

For people with anxiety, it will allow them to prepare in advance and can let them know where their input is required.

It's useful for the whole team to prepare and understand the purpose of the meeting

For more workplace tips, follow ClearTalents on LinkedIn

2. Allow flexibility in remote meetings

Let your staff know it's OK to adjust settings for virtual meetings. Some people may want captions turned on, while others who experience sensory overload may wish to keep cameras turned off. Empowering them to keep cameras off will allow them to input confidently.

Many meeting platforms include features such as 'raise hands'. It can be useful to encourage everyone to use this so that all voices are easily heard in a meeting.

3. Encourage people to take a break

Work-related stress, anxiety and depression accounted for half of all work-related ill-health in 2020/21, and there's a significant increase in employees suffering from burnout, as our blog reveals.

Encourage employees to take regular breaks to maintain good mental health. Breaks are also important to reduce the risks of repetitive strain injury, which can result from using a keyboard and mouse. A break from using a monitor is good for reducing eye strain, too.

We also recommend making sure staff are able to switch off during holiday periods.

• Read our tips for supporting mental health in the workplace
4. Flex your communications styles

Often knowing simple etiquette and top tips can put diverse colleagues at their ease.

Step back a pace or two so that a wheelchair user doesn't have to crane their neck.

Be aware that someone with Autism won't appreciate the nuances of sarcasm and most likely take it at face value, and someone who appears to be trans-gender won't mind your asking what their preferred pronouns are. ClearTalents covers all these and more in a simple-to-share report.

• Read more tips for using inclusive language in the workplace

5. Use Microsoft's Accessibility Checker

Many employees will need documents to have a clear font, good colour contrast, proper headings and described images (perhaps due to dyslexia or vision impairment).

Microsoft includes an accessibility checker that will highlight where you can make documents more accessible.

The accessibility checker sits beside the spellchecker tool on the Microsoft Ribbon. Click Review.

5 stats on workplace stress and how to reduce it

If your employee retention isn't as good as you'd like, then one of the causes could be stress in the workplace.

In 2020/21, work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill-health.

ClearTalents reduces workplace stress for your employees. [⌷SEP]*Claim your FREE* try before you buy *offer.*

For international stress awareness week (7-11 November 2022), ClearTalents explored key statistics relating to stress in the workplace and how employers can address the causes of stress at work.

Statistic 1: How has Covid-19 impacted work-related stress?

Hybrid working is the new normal, so how has this shift impacted workers' well-being?

Statistics from the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show that in the pre-pandemic years, rates of self-reported work-related stress, anxiety and depression had shown signs of increasing.

In 2020/21, rates were higher, but the HSE noted that this was not statistically different to the previous year. However, of the 822,000 workers suffering from work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2020/21, an estimated 449,000 reported that this was caused or made worse by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, said the HSE.

Other statistics show that workplace adjustments haven't always progressed from the office to the home office and that many disabled workers are being left behind.

How to support remote and hybrid workers

ClearTalents allows employees to create up to three profiles, including one for in the office, one for working at home and a third for hybrid working.

For example, employees can self-disclose sources of stress and enable you to make reasonable adjustments that will help you retain staff. A reasonable adjustment might be to allow someone with neurodiverse needs to keep their camera switched off while working from home.

[Contact ClearTalents](#) to find out more about ClearTalents At Work.

Statistic 2. How does stress vary by organisation and sector?

Small workplaces had a statistically significantly lower rate of work-related stress, depression or anxiety, whilst medium and large enterprises had a statistically significantly higher rate, [found the HSE](#).

Stress at work is higher than average in the Education, Human health and social work activities and public administration and defence sectors.

Those in professional organisations have the highest stress, depression and anxiety rate per 100,000 workers.

To [try before you buy](#), contact us for a one-month, free trial for up to 25 employees and a taster of our dashboard and reporting that informs managers and HR professionals.

A scalable solution for all organisations

ClearTalents At Work is a one-stop shop for reasonable adjustment guidance in the workplace. We increase productivity

and retention by identifying the tools employees need to do their work effectively.

Statistic 3: How many employees suffer from stress in the workplace?

In the UK, an estimated 822,000 workers were affected by work-related stress, depression or anxiety. That's double Bristol's population and greater than Leeds' population.

Stress, depression and anxiety are often invisible. ClearTalents' profiles allow employees to self-disclose challenges and, where they do, to probe deeper. For example, we ask if people feel stressed or anxious while communicating. If the answer is 'yes', ClearTalents suggests things that might help, such as providing information in advance.

The employee can tick adjustments they find helpful.

Find out more about ClearTalents At Work.

4. How common is burnout, and what is burnout?

Employee burnout is a global concern. A report by Deloitte found that 77% have experienced burnout in their current role.

Burnout, according to the Mayo Clinic, is a specific type of work-related stress.

It is: "a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity."

The same Deloitte report found that work stress ripples out, with 91% saying that unmanageable stress or frustration impacts the quality of their work and 83% saying burnout negatively impacts personal relationships.

This same survey found that nearly 70% of professionals feel their employers are not doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout.

25% of these surveyed did not use all their vacation time.

5. How many workdays are lost to mental health issues?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), an estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year worldwide to depression and anxiety at the cost of US$ 1 trillion per year in lost productivity.

There are practical actions to prevent mental health risks at work, protect and promote mental health at work, and support workers with mental health conditions.

ClearTalents is proven to reduce employee sickness. Contact ClearTalents to find out more.

The WHO offers tips on supporting people with mental health conditions to thrive at work, including:

- **Making reasonable adjustments** such as flexible hours and more time to complete tasks or regular supportive meetings with supervisors
- **Return to work programmes** for people who have been off with stress
- **Supported employment** initiatives to help people with severe mental health conditions get paid work.

Follow us on LinkedIn for regular tips on supporting employees

Five workplace taboos and how you can tackle them

However inclusive the workplace is, some topics can be tough to discuss. Are you worried your employees might have concerns they aren't talking about?

We explore five workplace taboos and what you can do to break the stigma.

1. The menopause

Menopausal symptoms can be challenging for women to discuss. Symptoms range from hot flushes to brain fog, sleepless nights, and depression. Menopausal women are the fastest-growing workforce demographic, according to a report by HR News.

However, the topic is often taboo, with 63% of women claiming their employers don't have policies to help them through the transition.

In fact, 1 in 10 women has quit their jobs due to menopausal symptoms.

Listen to the Clear Company's podcast on starting a conversation about menopause.

ClearTalents at work helps women self-disclose menopausal symptoms and can help you to identify reasonable adjustments that may help.

• Read more on <u>how to retain an ageing workforce</u>.

2. Talking about diversity

There's an important distinction between diversity and inclusion.

A diverse workforce has a breadth of employees from diverse backgrounds of different ages, sexual preferences and abilities.

A genuinely inclusive workplace embraces a culture where people can bring their authentic selves to work and gives them the tools to perform at their best.

However, there's evidence that some avoid discussing diversity in the workplace for fear of getting it wrong. We believe it's vital to keep the conversation going.

ClearTalents is designed around the 9 protected characteristics in The Equality Act 2010.

• Read <u>tips for using inclusive language in the workplace</u>

3. Mental Health

Everyone has mental health. However, mental illness is hard to discuss, and a perceived stigma is attached. It's also often a disability that's invisible.

Yet, according to the Mental Health Foundation, almost one in seven of us has experience of mental illness.

Nearly half of UK workers are close to burnout.

Depression and anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill-health in 2020/21.

Mental health is the most requested form of reasonable adjustment through ClearTalents.

· Find out more about ClearTalents at work.
· Read our tips for looking after your mental health

4. Ill-health and long-term conditions

According to the International Longevity Centre, older workers make up a greater proportion of the workforce across the G20. According to the CIPD, over 10.4 million older workers account for nearly a third (32.6%) of the workforce and more than 1.2 million workers over 65. With age comes experience, but it may also increase the likelihood of acquired disabilities and long-term conditions.

ClearTalents At Work enables employees to self-disclose long-term conditions.

- Read our tips on <u>retaining an ageing workforce</u>
- Read tips on <u>reasonable adjustments for long-term conditions</u>

5. Caring responsibilities

People can be reluctant to discuss caring responsibilities in the workplace. A report by the CIPD found that almost a third of working carers haven't discussed their caring role with anyone at work. The same report says that a quarter of working carers are considering giving up their job entirely because of the difficulty they experienced in combining work and care – meaning you could lose good people from your team. However, you could keep them by making a few reasonable adjustments.

- <u>ClearTalents At Work</u> helps employees self-disclose caring responsibilities

How to support Mental Health in the workplace

This World Mental Health Day (October 10, 2022), the World Health Organisation is launching a campaign to make mental health & well-being for all a global priority.

At ClearTalents, our focus is on workplace well-being.

- 79% of British workers feel stressed every month
- Close to half (46%) of UK workers are close to burnout
- In 2020/21, an estimated 822,000 workers were affected by work-related stress, depression or anxiety.
- In 2020/21, work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill health.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, nearly one in seven of us has experience of mental illness. 12.7 per cent of all sick days in the UK can be attributed to mental illness, while it's estimated that better mental-health support could save UK businesses £8bn every year.

Mental health tips for the workplace

ClearTalents supports employers and employees in looking after their mental well-being.

Employees can create a diversity profile that includes talking about their mental health to enable employers to make reasonable adjustments.

Here are some tips to support employees with their mental well-being at work:

1. Flexible working policy

Covid-19 prompted an almost overnight switch to flexible and home-based working. For some employees, the shift has led to a better work-life balance. A pre-pandemic survey, albeit a small

one, found that 39% of those who had shifted to flexible working had better mental health.

A study by Kingston University on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that workers on flexible contracts tended to be more emotionally engaged, more satisfied with their work, more likely to speak positively about their organisation and less likely to quit.

However, there are downsides to flexible working. Some people may feel disconnected, and there's also evidence that reasonable adjustments made in the office haven't transferred to the home office or flexible working environments.

- Read our article how to Make flexible working fit for a disabled workforce

Other studies show a greater risk of burnout for remote workers, so it's vital to keep a conversation going about how employees are doing.

- Contact Us to find out how ClearTalents can build a dialogue with your teams

2. Foster an Inclusive workplace

You can embrace a diverse workforce, but if employees don't have the right tools, the workplace won't be truly inclusive. When the workplace is inclusive, everyone benefits, including in terms of mental health.

- Find out what <u>diversity leaders think</u> is the key to an inclusive workplace
- Read <u>how to create an inclusive workplace</u>
- <u>Contact Us</u> for support with workplace inclusion

3. Apps for workplace well-being

There are apps for well-being which you could recommend to your employees (note we haven't tested the apps, and they are no substitute for seeking support from a medical professional).

Happify: The Happify App focuses on ways to feel happier. You'll need to sign-up. There are different tracks that you can follow, such as one on how to get a better night's sleep. Some are free but be aware that there are in-app purchases.

The app is available to download for iOS and Android.

Headspace: Headspace is an app to support people with meditation and sleep. There is a 14-day free trial, followed by a subscription.

Moodistory: This mood tracker app enables you to track your app over a period using simple icons. The aim is that you can create journal entries quickly and identify behaviour patterns.

It works with iOS and is compatible with the Apple Watch.

NHS: The NHS lists several well-being apps on its website.

ClearTalents allows employees to create a free diversity profile that includes the opportunity for them to disclose details of their mental health.

· Contact Us for more details
· Find out more about ClearTalents at Work

4. Encourage regular breaks

We're more productive when we look after ourselves, and regular breaks can help to prevent burnout. Encourage staff to take regular breaks. It's important to have breaks from working on a computer screen and from continuous typing and other repetitive tasks.

Maybe make a point of getting people to reclaim their lunch break. You could even introduce some team activities together or remotely and build connections.

5. It's OK, not to be OK

Encourage a conversation about mental health at work. Let people know that it's OK not to be OK and that they can have a conversation about it.

· Contact Us to find out how ClearTalents can encourage a conversation about mental health in the workplace

Pre- and Post-holidays can be a time of stress. [Read our tips on reducing it](#).

Good people are hard to find, so companies are wise to retain them. Reasonable adjustments boost retention and help you get the best from your people. Our article explores the numbers behind the Great Resignation and offers tips on retaining staff.

The true cost of hiring new staff

It's expensive to hire new people, and it takes time to find the right people – if you're lucky.

The CIPD estimates the average cost of filling a vacancy, including labour costs, is £6,125, rising to £19,000 for a manager role. Recruitment agencies can charge 20-30% of the salary.

A report by the [British Business Bank](#) estimates that if you hire someone new at the average UK salary of £27,600, the true cost, on average, for the first year is around £62,890.

The financial cost of losing staff

A high staff turnover can also prove expensive. Research by Oxford Economics and Unum claims the average cost of turnover per employee (earning £25,000 a year or more) is £30,614.

So, if you replace three employees in one year, the cost is close to £92,000.

Those costs include the following:

· Hiring costs
· Onboarding and training
· Loss of productivity

Staff retention has become harder following Covid-19, which prompted much-hyped trends toward the so-called Great Resignation and Quiet quitting.

For example, a report by PwC published in May 2022 claims that 22% of workers plan to quit their jobs in the next 12 months. The global study, which includes more than 2,000 respondents in the UK, found that 27% of UK workers plan to ask their employer for more money in the next 12 months.

Elsewhere, research finds that 85% of UK Businesses are feeling the pinch of the Great Resignation. Of the 85% affected:

· Almost a third (32%) said they'd seen negative impacts on employee wellbeing.
· 31% had seen team burnout
· 20% said it had led to unreasonable employee workloads.

Why are people leaving their jobs in the Great Resignation?

People are leaving their jobs for a variety of reasons. Covid-19 has undoubtedly played its part. The lockdowns which resulted from the pandemic meant companies had no choice but to implement home working.

For many employees, it was a shift that resulted in improved work-life balance, and many are reluctant to return to the office, which can entail long expensive commutes. Many employees are planning to relocate because they can work from home; 46 per cent of people say they're likely to move because they can work remotely now, says Microsoft.

Microsoft also found that over 70 per cent of workers want flexible remote work options to continue, while over 65 per cent are craving more in-person time with their teams.

Tips for retaining staff during the Great Resignation

Keeping staff is financially beneficial, and it's not just about avoiding turnover costs. Indeed's report notes: "Employers with a high level of employee loyalty can provide a better customer experience, retain experienced talent and be more productive. All these advantages boost growth and generate a long-term increase in revenue."

Below we offer top tips for retaining people in the workplace

1. Retain an ageing workforce

Around 300,000 more workers aged 50 to 65 are now economically inactive in what the tabloid newspaper The Express dubbed the Silver Exodus. Over 50s are leaving work due to illness and disability and because they don't want to work anymore, says an ONS report.

However, you don't need to lose older and more experienced staff. Instead, you can make reasonable adjustments, which can account for changing needs such as long-term conditions, which may increase with age, supporting people with caring responsibilities, and encouraging mentoring between older and younger staff members.

- Read our tips on how to support an ageing workforce
- Read our tips for supporting people with long-term conditions
- Find out how ClearTalents can help you implement reasonable adjustments

2. Embrace diversity and inclusion in the workplace

Government statistics show that disabled workers move out of the workforce at nearly twice the rate (8.8%) of non-disabled workers. Workless disabled people move into work at almost one-third of the rate of workless non-disabled people.

Creating an inclusive workplace will benefit everyone and can boost your bottom line. For example, a survey by Glassdoor found that employee turnover rates within businesses with rich

company cultures are 13.9%, compared to 48.4% within organisations with poor company cultures.

- Read our article on <u>what it means to be an inclusive workplace</u>
- Read what key influencers <u>think is the secret to an inclusive workplace</u>
- <u>Contact ClearTalents</u> for help making reasonable adjustments for your employees

3. Consider flexible working options

One main reason people quit is that they don't want to return to the workplace. 59% of businesses attribute employee dissatisfaction with the organisation's flexible or hybrid working policy as one of the main reasons for resignations over the last year.

Offering flexible working is a great way to retain staff. However, you mustn't overlook the need to make reasonable adjustments for the office, home and a flexible approach.

ClearTalents allows employees to create up to three diversity profiles.

- <u>Contact Us</u> for more details on how we can support a flexible workforce
- Read our tips on <u>Making flexible working fit for a disabled workforce</u>

4. Focus on your employees' mental health and well-being

Burnout is another reason why people are quitting. Microsoft's survey found that:

- 37% of the global workforce thinks companies ask too much of them
- One in five think employers don't care about their work-life balance
- 54% feel overworked, and 39% feel exhausted

Others have realised they don't like their jobs. Without the camaraderie of working together and doing their roles at home, there's arguably an increased focus on the role, but there's a risk they'll lose connection.

As a manager, ClearTalents can support you in having an open conversation with employees, which includes exploring their mental well-being. According to the ONS, adults in their 50s are more likely to give stress or mental health as a reason for leaving work.

Listening to feedback from your team and acting on it is a fantastic way to retain staff.

- Contact Us for more information about ClearTalents

5. Make reasonable adjustments at work

Employers are legally required to make Reasonable Adjustments for disabled people. A 'reasonable adjustment' is "a change that must be made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to an employee's disability when doing their job," according to Acas.

A reasonable adjustment may include changes to the workplace (in work or hybrid working), equipment or services. ClearTalents enables employees to create up to three diversity profiles and offers hints and tips on how employers can make reasonable adjustments based on their needs.

· Find out more about ClearTalents at Work

What is an inclusive workplace?

HR leaders are rightly focusing on Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace to ensure that they're recruiting and retaining the right people – a diverse workforce also creates a competitive advantage and can boost innovation within the workplace.

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of National Inclusion Week, we explore what an inclusive workplace looks like and how you can enable one within your organisation.

What is the difference between diversity and inclusion?

There's an important distinction between diversity and inclusion, and HR leaders should invest time to understand the nuances and keep dialogues open.

Diversity refers to the demographic differences of a specific group. So, it may reference the 9 protected characteristics afforded to individuals under The Equality Act 2010. Specifically, these are:

- Age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- marriage and civil partnership,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- sex,
- sexual orientation.

Organisations should aspire to be representative of society and encourage a diverse workforce. Currently, 47% of the UK workforce are women, according to the ONS, which is broadly representative. However, disabled people are underrepresented; the employment rate of disabled people is 53% compared to 82% of non-disabled people, according to Scope.

Disabled people continue to be underrepresented in the UK workforce

Your diversity statistics may say that you're bucking this national trend, but that doesn't automatically mean that your workplace is inclusive (see below).

- Find out more about how ClearTalents can help with <u>inclusive recruitment</u>

What is workplace inclusion?

Inclusion is rooted in equality, which means that all employees have equal rights and opportunities. Inclusive Employers, which is responsible for workplace inclusion week, defines inclusion as:

"The culture in which the mix of people can come to work, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, and work in a way that suits them and delivers your business or service needs. Inclusion will ensure that everyone feels valued and, importantly, adds value."

The culture in which the mix of people can come to work, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, and work in a way that suits them

So, a diverse workforce may represent disabled people, but an inclusive organisation enables everyone to feel comfortable and confident and to bring their best, authentic selves to work.

CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, defines workplace inclusion at an individual and organisational level.

- **Individual workplace inclusion** relates to feelings of belonging, having a voice and being valued for individual and authentic skills and abilities
- **Organisational workplace inclusion** involves valuing difference, allowing all employees the opportunity to develop, participate and use their voice to effect change, irrespective of their background.

Meryl Evans CPACC, a leading voice in disability advocacy, describes the difference as follows: "What makes a good inclusive workplace is that employees have all the tools to thrive in their careers. Diversity is bringing in people. But it doesn't mean they have the tools and support to thrive. True inclusion does," Meryl Evans.

Now we know what good looks like, how can HR leaders enable it?

Authenticity: enabling self-disclosure in the workplace

Valuing the uniqueness of all employees demands a culture where individuals are "able to be authentic and "Feel like they can be themselves, regardless of whether they are different or share many similarities with their colleagues," says CIPD in a

report. Otherwise, "individuals could feel like they need to engage in 'surface acting' or cover their identities," added CIPD.

Yet not all employees feel comfortable disclosing differences at work. A survey by Harvard Review, for example, found that

- 13% of employees have a visible disability, such as using a wheelchair
- 62% reported that their disability is invisible.

These invisible disabilities include depression and other mental health conditions. ADHD and diabetes (an example of a long-term condition).

Disclosing aspects of identity makes for a happier workforce, according to Harvard Review

According to the Harvard Review, disclosing aspects of identity makes for a happier workforce. For example, employees with disabilities who disclose to most people they interact with are more than twice as likely to feel regularly happy or content at work than employees with disabilities who have not disclosed to anyone (65% versus 27%). They are also less likely to regularly feel nervous or anxious (18% versus 40%) or isolated (8% versus 37%).

- ClearTalents enables employees to self-disclose their needs by allowing them to create diversity profiles that can engender HR leaders to make reasonable adjustments.

Make reasonable adjustments to empower disabled employees

Employers are legally required to make Reasonable Adjustments for disabled people. A 'reasonable adjustment' is "a change that must be made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to an employee's disability when doing their job," according to Acas.

What is a reasonable adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment may include changes to the workplace, equipment or services or how things are done. Specifically, someone with arthritis may benefit from an ergonomic keyboard or mouse (equipment). Someone with autism may find noisy workplaces difficult and may benefit from headphones or a quiet area to work (workplace).

Another example is ensuring that information is available in an accessible format. Microsoft, for example, now includes an accessibility checker in programs such as Microsoft Word so you can check whether the document is accessible for visually-impaired and blind users.

- [Read more on making flexible working fit for disabled employees](#)

Or you may need to offer flexibility in when and where people work. Some disabled people may wish to vary their core hours to avoid ravelling during the rush hour, while others may prefer to work from home. The shift to hybrid working has proved beneficial. Still, there's also a growing body of evidence that says

that reasonable adjustments may not yet have translated from the workplace to people's home environments.

Many reasonable adjustments are affordable, such as buying an ergonomic mouse. However, employees can also apply for funding for reasonable adjustments through the government's Access to Work Scheme, which could pay, for example, for a BSL interpreter for meetings.

ClearTalents enables employees to create up to three diversity profiles and offers hints and tips on how employers can make reasonable adjustments based on their needs.

Cultural change: feeling valued and included

Famously, Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

It's a great description of how an inclusive workplace feels. A report by Deloitte found that the top three elements cited were:

- An atmosphere where I feel comfortable being myself (47%)
- An environment that provides a sense of purpose (39%)
- A place where work flexibility (parental leave, ability to work remotely) is provided as a top priority (36%)

The report said: "Diverse teams are absolutely important, but inclusion unleashes the power of diversity, fostering an organisational culture where everyone feels comfortable speaking up and being themselves. Today's workforce is looking for organisations to go beyond addressing how inclusion looks but also addressing how inclusion feels."

"Today's workforce is looking for organisations to go beyond addressing how inclusion looks but also addressing how inclusion feels," Deloitte.

Doing so requires cultural change. Deloitte says those changes start at the top and highlights the importance of senior leaders in reinforcing an inclusive culture. It's a perspective gathering pace through movements such as The Valuable 500, which has signatories from the top 500 companies worldwide but is equally applicable to SMEs.

A genuinely inclusive workplace is one where inclusion is part of the culture rather than something separate from the HR or talent strategy.

What are the benefits of an inclusive workforce?

There are many benefits of an inclusive workplace. The CIPD says it is "linked to positive team outcomes, reduced absenteeism and enhanced job commitment, suggesting that inclusive behaviour allows individuals to work together effectively and creates a healthy environment for employees."

You're more likely to recruit top candidates if you're inclusive. CIPD found that 80% of those surveyed said that inclusion is essential when choosing an employer. Conversely, 39% would consider leaving their employer for one that is more inclusive; 23% have already left.

• Read how inclusive recruitment can boost your bottom line
A report by Forbes finds that inclusivity boosts innovation. It found that 48% of respondents strongly agree that a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial to encouraging different perspectives and ideas that drive innovation. "Multiple and varied voices have a wide range of experiences, and this can help generate new ideas about products and practices," it said.

• Contact us for more details on how ClearTalents can support an inclusive workplace
For more workplace tips, follow ClearTalents on LinkedIn

A Diverse Approach: Making Flexible Working Fit For Disabled Employees

We're all working flexibly now. That is the dominant narrative of the post-pandemic workplace, but while flexible working is a preference, it may already be a necessity for disabled workers. For example, the commute may prove tiring for people with energy-limiting conditions or overwhelming for others. So, the

shift to flexible work could create opportunities for disabled workers and give employers access to a broader talent pool.

However, that depends on reasonable adjustments moving from workplace to home.

It requires a tailored, individual approach that doesn't assume flexible working is synonymous with reasonable adjustments. We'll explore what a shift to flexible working means for disabled workers. Plus, how can employers embrace flexibility without losing sight of how to create a truly diverse experience for disabled employees wherever they might be?

Aman in a wheelchair writing on a whiteboard

A growing appetite for flexible working

Disabled workers' right to reasonable adjustments is enshrined in law under the Equality Act 2010, which lists 9 protected characteristics. Pre-pandemic requests weren't always granted. For example, the UK Disability Survey found fewer than half (48%) of disabled workers 'agree' or 'strongly agree' their employer makes sufficient reasonable adjustments.

Fewer than half of workers believe their employer makes sufficient reasonable adjustments

Robin Christopherson, head of inclusion for AbilityNet, agrees employers have been resistant to flexible working. "Employees with disabilities or impairments have been calling for flexible working for many years now and not always finding their employers amenable to that."

TUC spokesperson Alice Arkwright agrees. "We had anecdotal evidence that many disabled workers would have liked to have worked from home, but those requests were being denied," she said.

ClearTalents allows for up to three profiles for employees. Contact Us for more information.

Covid, a catalyst for hybrid working

Yet, the pandemic has acted as a catalyst with all employees demanding flexibility. Of those who quit in 2021, 21% said they did so because of a lack of flexible working.

In addition, almost three-quarters of workers (70%) want flexible work options to continue. Among UK workers, there is a strong preference for hybrid working (59%) compared to 18% who wanted to work full-time in an office and 23% who want to work fully remote.

ClearTalents can help you discover employees' preferences. Contact Us for more information.

Disabled workers want to work flexibly and from home

woman in a wheelchair working from homeDisabled workers are more likely to want to work at home, a TUC report found. "Just over 90% of those who could work from home during the pandemic wanted to continue some form of home-based working in the future," said Arkwright."

Fortunately, the pandemic means flexible working is more acceptable. "The pandemic has shifted flexible working to an accepted way of working for everyone, including disabled workers," said Christopherson.

Morgan Lobb, CEO of VERCIDA Group, which focuses on workplace agrees. "There's been an increase in the number of positions advertised as flexible and hybrid," he said. "I was looking at some statistics online from Scope, and the number of people with a disability in work is up by 1.3 million over the last five years," he added.

The benefits of home-working for disabled employees

There are definite benefits of home working for disabled workers. The TUC report, for example, found:

63% said it gave them greater control over their working lives

47% had been able to change their work routine

40% said home working reduced fatigue and tiredness

However, home working presents challenges, too, says Christopherson. "Because of the swiftness of the first lockdown, many people's adjustments were left in the office. The TUC agrees, "The last 18 months have been dominated by discussions about flexible working [but] the experiences of disabled workers have largely been absent from these debates."

"The last 18 months have been dominated by discussions about flexible working [but] the experiences of disabled workers have largely been absent from these debates."

A lack of adjustments negatively impacts mental health

The TUC found that many lacked the equipment to do their job such as a desk, chair or computer (34%). Others experienced difficulties participating in online meetings (9%) and lacked the specialist software they needed to do their jobs (7%).

scrabble tiles spell out mental healthA lack of proper equipment negatively impacted disabled workers' mental health. Workers whose mental health had worsened because of working from home were twice as likely to say they lacked adequate office equipment and three times as likely to report lacking the software or computer programmes needed to do their jobs.

"People with disabilities will generally want to have access to certain tools. The tools give them back certain elements they need to get back onto an even keel. For example, a disabled person might use Jaws or Dragon to communicate effectively," said Lobb.

ClearTalents will recommend workplace adjustments. Contact Us for more information.

Reasonable adjustments for flexible home-based working

shows a woman in a wheelchair working from homeAn individual approach to flexible working is vital, and we can't afford for flexible working to become a "catch-all" for disabled workers. "I think there shouldn't be an assumption that because we've seen this shift in hybrid working, we've solved all the problems," said Arkwright.

"Working from home is very popular amongst disabled workers, but we're seeing some employers don't necessarily implement it in the best way for disabled people. Employers still have a requirement to provide reasonable adjustments when someone is working from home," she added.

We can't afford for flexible working to become a "catch-all" approach for disabled workers

Flexibility goes beyond home-working, and employers must consider all types of flexible working. "For some disabled workers, it might be adjustments in working hours that they need, especially for those who can't work from home. So, we must ensure that those things are still happening as well," said Arkwright.

Arkwright added: "Flexible working covers a huge range of different options. And adjustments for disabled workers include a huge range of different options. So, it could be hours-based flexibility, changes to break patterns, different start, finish times, part-time working job shares and things like set shift patterns for others."

Cultural change: adjusting for an inclusive future

There are clear benefits of flexible working for disabled and non-disabled employees For employers is an opportunity to widen the talent pool and to recruit the best candidate regardless of location.

"It's difficult to accommodate everybody's needs, and that's where the technology piece comes into play," said Morgan Lobb. "If we use it to our advantage, then we can have a wider audience available to us where we were restricted by geography.

However, to create a truly inclusive environment, goes deeper and requires an inclusive culture. "We can employ people from all over the country. Where I want to get to as an organisation is also creating a sense of belonging," said Lobb.

"We want to design a place where people feel that they want to be and belong in a group because human interaction is very important," Morgan Lobb, CEO of VERCIDA

It also means ensuring that the workplace is accessible for people that want to go to an office. "There could be things at home preventing us from doing our jobs such as an abusive partner, or a sick pet or personal arguments. "We want people to have an accessible environment that they can use. We want to design a

place where people feel that they want to be and belong in a group because human interaction is very important," Lobb added.

"There's been studies about how people, when they meet each other, and they shake hands, unknowingly people within one minute of shaking hands with an individual smell their hand. We give off pheromones that we use to communicate with each other."

ClearTalents will recommend workplace adjustments. Contact Us for more information.

A flexible future; baking it in

The pandemic has shifted the debate on how, when, where, and how long we work. It's a welcome change for all workers, and disabled workers arguably make it easier to ask for adjustments that were already a legal right. However, there is still work to be done.

For example, employers need to offer flexibility within their job advertisements, says Arkwright. "We think employers should put possible flexible working options in job adverts. That would normalise flexible working. So, people would know before they apply for a job."

She added, "Making flexible working the default is important because it reduces the stigma, normalises it and just makes it easier for everyone to be able to work flexibly. We know that many people don't feel comfortable asking for reasonable adjustments because of fear of negative consequences or being turned down."

However, it's also important for employers to recognise that someone can need a reasonable adjustment at any time. "It can happen at any point during an adult's working life," said Lobb. "Most disabilities, for example, are acquired during working life, very disproportionate to the number of people born with a disability."

For more workplace tips, follow ClearTalents on LinkedIn

How to ensure your recruitment process is inclusive

As a prospective employer, your role is to put candidates at ease so that they bring their 'A' game to an interview, ensuring you get the best person from a diverse talent pool. It is also essential in helping you secure the best people as candidates judge you as a prospective employer based on how welcome you make them feel.

Being inclusive begins with how you invite shortlisted candidates to an interview. Some neurodivergent people, for example, may find visiting new places challenging – including navigating transport systems. Then there's the fear of unknown places, processes, and what questions they'll ask. So to make people feel comfortable, provide simple, clear instructions and use plain English.

Read on for our top 5 tips for an inclusive invitation to interview.

1. Summarise interview details in advance

Signpost the primary information, including the interview's date and time, location, interview panellists' names, and job descriptions. Also, include a full address and postcode – many people may find it helpful to use online maps or map apps to find their way.

- [Contact us](#) for more details about our inclusive recruitment tool

2. Make it easy for candidates to find you

Help make candidates' journeys as simple as possible by providing details of the nearest public transport. For example, you could mention nearby train stations. What are the numbers of the local bus routes? Do you have off-road parking? If not, is there paid-for parking on the street, or can you provide a permit for candidates in advance? Where people are getting a taxi, is there a drop-off point? Consider providing travelling expenses.

- [Find out more about our inclusive recruitment tool](#)

3. Be clear about what candidates can expect on arrival

Are there any special instructions for when people arrive? For example, you may have an office within a shared building, and candidates will need to sign in and come to a specific floor. Is the building accessible for disabled people? Is there a lift? What happens when they get there? Is there a waiting area in reception? If you know who'll be collecting them, say so, it sounds friendly and helps to relax potential candidates.

There shouldn't be any surprises so let candidates know what to expect in advance

4. Manage candidates' expectations: dress code, tests

Candidates benefit from clear instructions and knowing what to expect. There shouldn't be any surprises. So, if there's a task and an interview, let candidates know – and what format it will take. How long? Share interview questions in advance to give people a chance to prepare.

You might also mention the dress code. It's normal to wear formal clothes for an interview, but a smart dress might mean different things to different people – and that's OK. You're hiring the best candidate – not their wardrobe. Be alive to your own Unconscious Bias that might judge people on their dress or other characteristics beyond ability.

In addition, waiting to hear back post-interview can be an anxious time. So, let candidates know timelines in advance so they know what to expect. Is this the first of two interviews, or will you be appointing someone after a second round?

· For more workplace tips, underline follow ClearTalents on LinkedIn
5. Mind your language – and make it accessible
The language you use in the interview invitation sets the tone for the interview. Make it friendly without being too informal. Be

reassuring and let candidates know that you intend to empower them to do their best rather than "catch them out." Use simple language so everyone can understand and be clear to minimise miscommunication.

- Find out more about how ClearTalents can support inclusive recruitment