



Leisure factsheet 3

Workforce development

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disability
inclusion
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**A diverse and
person-centred
workforce is one
of the biggest assets
in any organisation.**

Developing a strong inclusive culture and supporting your workforce to thrive helps to engage everyone, including disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.



What makes your workforce inclusive?

Your workforce should be inclusive in both attitude and approach. Engaging and developing people throughout your organisation will be key to a confident, skilled, and representative workforce which has:



A whole organisation focus on disability regardless of role.



A person-centred and co-produced approach, driven by staff and the needs of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.



Inclusion as an integral element of workforce planning and recruitment.



Diversity and representation valued in all aspects of business and services.



Knowledgeable teams equipped to succeed and confidently deliver inclusive services.



Positive attitudes and perceptions, open to change, learning, and trying new approaches.



Advocates of inclusive practice, engaged in professional discussion and actively developing best practice.



Embedded check and challenge processes for accessibility.



Think about how well equipped your workforce is to deliver inclusive services to customers who are disabled or have a long-term health condition. Ask yourself:

- Are there opportunities to further develop confidence and share knowledge?
- How successful are you in engaging disabled people and people with long-term health conditions as an active and valued part of your workforce?



Developing an inclusive workforce

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Helping your organisation create an inclusive workforce can involve a range of tactics:

Focus on the whole workforce

Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions will interact directly and indirectly with your entire organisation. You'll therefore need a confident, skilled, and diverse workforce across all aspects of your business.

Embedding accessibility within all roles and processes makes it a core area of focus. However, development opportunities need to be relevant to people's roles. For example, marketing or human resources teams will have different needs to your frontline workforce. Advanced and specialist training should be undertaken based on robust workforce and customer needs analysis.



Top tip: A comprehensive and cohesive workforce development plan will help you achieve this.

Talk to your teams

Be proactive in engaging with your workforce to identify their development needs. Carrying out regular surveys or facilitating discussion at team meetings can provide valuable insight. Embedding inclusion questions into onboarding, performance management, and procurement processes can also be effective. Ask yourself:

- How do people currently feel about the inclusivity of your organisation - as employees and as customers?
- Where are your strengths, skills, and capacity gaps?



Top tip: These approaches can reveal strong assets to support your improvement journey. It's likely your teams will have a lot to offer.



Respond to lived experiences

Ongoing input from external stakeholders will strengthen your workforce's development. Involving disabled people and people with long-term health conditions makes sure their needs are at the heart of planning and decision making.

This demand-led approach will also help you to prioritise and focus your resources. As you progress, encourage disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, and your workforce to continue to check and challenge around accessibility to refine your approach.

Nurture person-centred skills

Your workforce strategy should clearly show your organisation's commitment to inclusion. A key priority will be promoting your inclusive culture and values organisation-wide. Your workforce's ability to relate and engage with disabled people and people with long-term health conditions will be key. Think about:

- How you may need to influence, build confidence, and encourage new ways of thinking and working amongst your teams.
- Can you nurture engagement, listening, and co-production skills as well as technical knowledge?

Get creative

Your workforce should be aware of their impact on disabled people and people with long-term health conditions and be able to respond appropriately. New starter, refresher courses, and continuing professional development (CPD) in specialist areas are all great ways to add this value and expertise.



Top tip: Remember training doesn't always need to be formal and qualification based or carry a huge cost to your business. Be creative in equipping your workforce.

Think about how you can use your onboarding process and other in-house training options:

- Can you set up mentoring relationships or share information and resources via your newsletter, staff intranet, or handbook?
- What about team meetings, conferences and networks, or your partnerships with disability organisations?

These are great ways to share and build knowledge. Remember to monitor the impact of your training too.

Foster workforce inclusion and diversity

Diversity requires an inclusive culture where everyone is equally valued and able to contribute. Supporting individuals with different backgrounds and skillsets throughout your organisation creates a diverse and representative workforce. Think about:

- Are you providing opportunities for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to be an active part of your workforce?
- Your existing workforce is a great starting point. Can you invest in individuals with lived experience and capability to support their career progression?

Inclusive recruitment plans and policies will also help you attract new disabled talent and inclusion expertise. Does your organisation monitor disability employment levels, have accessible recruitment processes, and make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff?



Top tip: [EmployAbility Leisure](#) offers guidance to support disabled people, training providers and employers to get more disabled people working in leisure.

Useful resources

Activity Alliance has a suite of resources and services that can support you with workforce development.

- Our [Delivering an excellent service for disabled customers e-learning course](#) can support your workforce to provide welcoming and inclusive experiences for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.
- Our [Taking a person-centred approach resource](#) encourages sport and leisure organisations to take a person-centred approach when planning and providing opportunities.
- The [Inclusive Activity Programme](#) will equip you with the skills to engage disabled people and people with long-term health conditions more effectively in physical activity.



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This factsheet is part of our leisure resource.

View the full resource on our website:

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This document is available in Word format. Please contact us if you need support. Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport. Registered Charity no. 1075180.