

***View from the Chair; Business Newsletter; Tuesday 22 October 2019  
by Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission NI***

## **Acting with confidence in recruiting someone with a disability**

Disabled people have to apply for 60% more jobs than non-disabled people before finding one. Almost a quarter of disabled people want to work but are unemployed, compared to just 16% of people without disabilities. And people living with disabilities are almost half as likely to be in paid work here in Northern Ireland, (40.6%) than people without disabilities (80.7%).

As an employer, you are in a position to be able to change these stark statistics by providing opportunities for work. It's important to recognise that disabled people may have skills you want.

At the recruitment stage, think about the abilities, skills and capabilities of disabled candidates and not only their disabilities. This means examining your own attitudes towards people with disabilities and having the same expectations of them as everyone else.

The 21% of people in Northern Ireland who live with some level of disability are a very diverse group, with a wide range of abilities, skills and aptitudes. It includes people with mobility problems, sensory impairments, mental health issues, learning disabilities... the list goes on and on. Every disabled person has a unique experience and capabilities, and your approach should be reflective of this diversity.

This is not just about ensuring you comply with the law, it's about acting with confidence when it comes to interviewing and appointing someone with a disability.

Your starting question should be: Does our recruitment process attract the full diversity of applicants, including people with a disability, or are some people deterred from applying due to the process?

Everything hinges on the issue of "reasonable adjustment". Your legal obligation is to do everything you can reasonably do to accommodate a job candidate who declares a disability and asks for a reasonable adjustment throughout the recruitment process. Often this can be something very simple.

Moving beyond the reasonable adjustment duty, you could also consider adopting a range of positive action measures that could also help disabled job-seekers to obtain work. Examples might include operating a guaranteed interview scheme, providing vocational training or reserving a number of jobs only for disabled people. We would be happy to advise you on how to lawfully apply these and other similar measures.

Our Employer Training Programme and associated advisory guides can equip you or your HR team with knowledge of the law, and it's important that employers know their obligations.

But just as important is an attitude that is open and considers the person as a potential employee – find out what he or she can do, and create the situation that allows someone with a disability to demonstrate just how they can be a good employee.