

## **View from the Chair; Business Newsletter; 16 March 2021 Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission NI**

### **Making it Work: Employing people with disabilities**

Making it Work, a new publication from the Equality Commission, is a shot in the arm of positivity just at a time when we need it. It tells the stories of six people with different disabilities who have used employment support services to get back into work – and not just any work at any time, but key workers who have worked or trained during the pandemic.

We produced this in conjunction with NIUSE, the Northern Ireland Union for Supported Employment, as part of our work towards more and better jobs for disabled people, a key priority for the Commission.

At present only 37.3% of disabled people in Northern Ireland have jobs - the lowest figure across all of the UK regions. We also know from Scope research that disabled people make 60% more applications than those without a disability before finding a job. One of the main barriers to employment is preconceived ideas of what disabled workers can't do. As an employer, you're in a position to help change that!

The pool of disabled people seeking work is large and diverse and we know from the employment support organisations that the range of skills and aptitudes is wide. With Making it Work we're aiming to showcase peer achievement and encourage other people with disabilities to see what the work or training opportunities might be for them.

The other side of this equation, though, is you. An employer can provide opportunities for work by using the provisions within the Disability Discrimination Act. You can use positive action measures to help disabled jobseekers into your workplace, for example by using initiatives such as vocational training or reserving a number of jobs only for disabled people. You must also consider the reasonable adjustment duty and our Advice and Compliance team can advise on how to lawfully apply these positive action measures.

If you employ disabled workers, you are not just getting an employee with the skills and abilities to do the job but you are increasing diversity and reflecting your local community in the workplace. Research shows that hiring people with disabilities can bring improvements in profitability, such as profits and cost-effectiveness, turnover and retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty and company image; competitive advantage such as diverse customers, customer loyalty and satisfaction, innovation, productivity, work ethic and safety and an inclusive work culture. Benefits

for people with disabilities include improved quality of life and income, enhanced self-confidence, expanded social network, and a sense of community.[i]

Have a look at Making it Work. You'll see employers with an open attitude to employing disabled workers whose real life examples highlight some of the positive action, support and reasonable adjustments that have been put in place. We have plenty of free and confidential advice and guidance available to help employers, just phone us 028 90 500 600 or email [edenquiries@equalityni.org](mailto:edenquiries@equalityni.org)

- [Download the pdf publication; Making it Work \(3.3mb\)](#)

*Footnote:*

[i] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29392591/>