

# Ready, Willing and Disabled

Investigating attitudes and other  
obstacles to employing disabled people

Liz Daone and Ruth Scott

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Introduction

**Think about it. How many disabled people do you know? How many disabled people do you recognise on the train, chat to at work, see in the pub or bump into in the supermarket? For many people, the answer is none.**

There are approximately 8.6 million<sup>1</sup> disabled people in the UK, yet the majority of non-disabled people don't know a disabled person. There are 6.8 million<sup>2</sup> disabled people of working age, yet few people work with a disabled person.

There are many reasons for disabled people's lack of visibility. The built environment, public transport, low expectations and negative attitudes can all exclude disabled people but one particular issue stands out. Disabled people account for almost 20% of the working age population and yet almost half of all disabled people of working age don't have a job.

For the vast majority of people, work provides far more than just a way to pay the bills. Work can give us a sense of community, purpose and belonging. Going to work helps us acquire new skills, make new friends and feel included. Also most employment has a positive financial effect enabling people to maintain a reasonable standard of living as well as afford the occasional luxuries that make life more enjoyable.

Government sees work as the simplest tool for combating social and economic deprivation and moving the poorest members of our community out of poverty. Not only does work build confidence and provide greater social and financial independence it also cuts the benefit bill. As such the Government is keen to get those disabled people who can work into employment.

Of course disabled people aren't a homogenous group. For some disabled people work is not an option and there are many other ways in which people who can't work make a valuable contribution to their communities – as parents, partners, neighbours, customers, campaigners and voters, to name but a few. Greater appreciation of disabled people's role above and beyond work is long overdue but this does not change the fact that there are still one million<sup>3</sup> disabled people who want to work but don't have a job.

Government and some employers are making efforts to address the situation. A number of schemes and initiatives aimed at helping disabled people find suitable work are in place including the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), WORKSTEP and Jobcentre Plus but disabled people are still under-represented in the workforce.

One explanation is that the schemes aren't working. But, realistically, none of these schemes will work if there isn't a willingness on the part of employers to give disabled people a fair chance. So why, when there is low unemployment, an unusually stable economy and a solid business case for having a diverse workforce, is it that this large, skilled workforce is still being ignored?

The Ready, Willing and Disabled survey aimed to get a clearer, more honest picture, of what disabled people, employers and employees think prevents disabled people getting employment. We wanted to know if employers had any concerns about employing disabled people and whether these were based on real concern for the success of their business or were just part of the myths and prejudice that many disabled people deal with in every aspect of their lives.

We wanted to assess people's understanding of what disables a person and see if, underneath the carefully worded equal opportunities statements, continuing ignorance, fear and prejudice amongst employers and employees are still preventing disabled people getting work.

The results are extremely illuminating.

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1 'Disability in Great Britain' 1999, DSS research report 94, Grundy et al  
2+3 Labour Force Survey summer 2002 – Great Britain

# The Ready, Willing and Disabled survey

## Summary

**The Ready, Willing and Disabled campaign grew out of the realisation that despite the many government schemes aimed at helping disabled people into employment, disabled people are still five times more likely than non-disabled people to be out of work and claiming benefits.**

The survey aimed to find out how employers and employees really feel about employing and working with disabled people and to see whether people's attitudes and opinions are influenced by common stereotypes and generalisations about disabled people and their abilities.

We also wanted to know what disabled people considered were the main barriers to getting a job and what they believe employers really think about employing disabled people.

The survey asked about the recruitment process, the accessibility of business premises, health and safety regulations, the financial implications of employing a disabled person, people's knowledge of disability issues, the attitudes of staff and customers towards disabled employees and people's perceptions of disabled people at work. Crucially, we asked respondents to think about whether each of these issues might prevent their company employing a disabled person.

The aim of the survey was to get a more honest picture of the issues that prevent companies employing disabled people. We deliberately asked challenging, sometimes provocative, questions to make people think carefully about their own attitudes and assumptions. Throughout the report we have analysed people's responses and attempted to challenge people's preconceptions and explode some of the myths around disabled people at work.

Many people included additional comments in their responses touching on their personal experiences of trying to find employment and working with disabled people. In many ways people's comments are the most revealing part of the survey and people's individual reflections are included throughout the report. With the exception of the good practice case studies we have not published the names of those featured as the aim of this report is to address the misinformation and prejudice that is still preventing disabled people getting employment, not to blame individuals or organisations.

## Key findings

Our survey reveals that attitudes are still a major barrier to disabled people getting employment. Stereotyped views of disabled people as incapable, unambitious, unreliable and costly to employ still abound amongst non-disabled people.

One disabled respondent summed up the situation very well:

**“All the issues mentioned in this survey prevent disabled people getting employment. The perception of a disabled person is one of someone who cannot function.”**

Many of the opinions expressed in this report are based on ignorance and lack of awareness, not on malice. But these opinions, however innocently formed, profoundly affect disabled people’s opportunities, confidence and status in our society.

Encouragingly the survey also revealed some examples of extremely good practice in attracting and recruiting disabled people and employing, training and developing the potential of disabled employees. These employers provide the proof that employing disabled people isn’t the perilous undertaking many people perceive it to be. They have set the standard that we hope other employers will follow to ensure they make sure they make the most of the huge pool of untapped talent.

Key findings from the perspectives of disabled people, employers and non-disabled employees can be found overleaf.

# Disabled people

Overall, disabled people's responses paint a bleak picture. Most disabled people have very little faith in the attitudes of employers and non-disabled employees. Most think that employers still make instant assumptions about disabled people's abilities and suitability for employment. They feel employers base their decisions on crude stereotypes and, as such, are reluctant to employ disabled people because they assume disabled people work more slowly, have more time off sick, need more support, cost a lot to employ and won't fit in with non-disabled staff.

We asked disabled people which three issues were the biggest barriers to getting work. They said:

1. Ignorance/lack of awareness
2. Access
3. Staff attitudes

A number of people also mentioned cost, the lack of positive company policies around employing disabled people and a lack of awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act as other major barriers to employing disabled people.

## Key findings

- When they were last looking for work, disabled people made an average of two and a half times as many job applications as non-disabled people and yet got fewer job offers.
- 82% of disabled respondents felt that fear of the unknown, i.e. the fact that most employers don't know a disabled person, and haven't worked with someone before, prevents employers taking on disabled employees.
- 78% of disabled respondents thought that the assumption that disabled people need more support from their colleagues and managers prevents employers employing disabled people.
- 37% of disabled people thought that negative staff attitudes were a barrier to finding employment.
- 86% of disabled respondents said that poor physical access in the workplace is a barrier to getting employment.
- 74% of disabled people thought inaccessible public transport is a barrier to getting work. Only 20% of employers agreed that this was a problem suggesting there is a significant lack of awareness of the access barriers disabled people face daily.

# Employers

Unfortunately employers went a long way towards confirming disabled people's worst fears. The answers and comments from employers demonstrate that ignorance, fear and prejudice are still a major barrier to employing disabled people. Many of their responses demonstrated a total lack of awareness of disabled people and the barriers they face. Many employers thought they could generalise about disabled people's characteristics and abilities as though all disabled people were identical, and these generalisations were apparent in a number of employers' opinions about the jobs they felt disabled people could and couldn't do.

We asked employers which three issues were the biggest barriers to getting work. They responded as follows:

1. Access
2. Lack of applicants
3. Employers' lack of awareness/training/support

Interestingly the first two issues deal with 'physical' rather than attitudinal issues. But, it's encouraging that employers recognise that attitudinal and awareness issues are a major barrier to employing disabled people and that they need training and support to help them overcome these barriers.

## Key findings

- 40% of employers didn't know if their premises would be accessible to someone with a physical impairment. Ignorance about the access requirements of people with sensory impairments was even higher. This shows that there is still a great deal of ignorance about what constitutes an accessible environment.
- 51% of employers didn't know if disabled people applied for jobs with their company or organisation.
- 45% of employers said they wouldn't be able to employ a disabled person because they couldn't afford it while a further 44% didn't know if cost would prevent them.
- 19% of employers said that the fact that they've never worked with a disabled person before, and so don't know what to expect, would prevent them employing a disabled person.
- 11% of employers said that they wouldn't employ a disabled person because their clients or customers wouldn't want to be served by a disabled person. A further 45% said they didn't know if this would prevent them employing someone.

# Employees

The survey revealed that the majority of employees had a very positive attitude towards disabled people with most disagreeing with statements suggesting that disabled people performed less well at work. Mostly, employees' views are very encouraging and demonstrate that staff are certainly not as unreceptive to disabled people as employers might think. However there is still a certain degree of ignorance amongst employees about disabled people's abilities and the jobs they are able to perform. There is a lack of awareness of the alternative ways disabled people can perform a wide variety of tasks and in a few cases a feeling that non-disabled people deserve to be employed before disabled people are considered.

We asked employees what they thought are the three biggest barriers to employing disabled people. They said:

1. Access
2. Disabled people not being able to do the job
3. Cost

Their answers demonstrate that employees are very aware of access barriers within the workplace and that there is still a lot of uncertainty about whether disabled people cost a lot to employ. A lack of awareness amongst employees is also evident, as there is still the perception that disabled people are less capable and if they can't do things in the usual way then they can't do them at all.

## Key findings

- 77% of employees said that staff attitudes wouldn't be a barrier to their company employing a disabled person. This is in contrast to disabled people's view that staff attitudes are the third biggest barrier to disabled people getting work.
- 23% of employees thought the fact that their company had never employed a disabled person before might prevent their company employing a disabled person. A further 28% didn't know if this would be a barrier.
- Over half of all employee respondents disagreed that public transport was a barrier to getting to work suggesting there is still a significant lack of awareness about the barriers disabled people face within the built environment.
- Some 26% of employees thought that disabled people would need more help and support from their colleagues and managers and that this would be a barrier to employing disabled people. A further 22% didn't know. The comments from respondents suggest that many people think disabled people won't pull their weight and that employing a disabled person could lead to them having to work harder.

# Background

As well as specific questions about the recruitment process, access and attitudes we also wanted to gather some background information about disabled people's success rate when looking for work.

In this section we look at how disabled people compare to non-disabled people in:

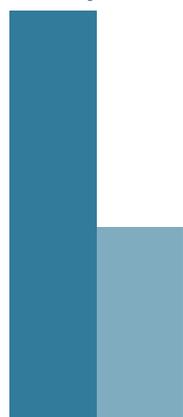
- Employment rate
- Application success rate
- Qualifications

**“It’s an unknown factor and the possibility of employing a disabled person certainly raises more concerns than immediately positive aspects.”**

Employer, media sector



Do you currently have a job?



**Yes**  
68%

**No**  
32%

## Employment rate

Our survey revealed that there is a very high rate of unemployment amongst disabled people. Over 30% of disabled respondents were out of work.

Official Department of Work and Pensions figures estimate that the real figure is even higher. There are 6.8 million disabled people of working age (20% of the total working age population) and 52% of these 6.8 million people are currently unemployed.

**“I have been looking for work for over two years. I get interviews but never the job.”**

Disabled respondent

## Applications

When they were last looking for a job, disabled people made an average of 19.9 job applications, got an average of 3.4 interviews and were offered an average of one job.

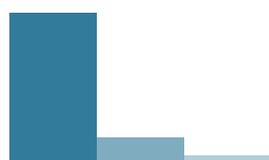
In comparison, for non-disabled people an average of 7.9 job applications got them an average of 2.4 interviews and an average of 1.3 job offers.

For non-disabled people fewer applications resulted in proportionally more interviews and more job offers.

**“I applied for 30 teaching posts which I was over-qualified for and got no interviews. No-one saw the solutions only the problems of my employment.”**

Disabled respondent

Average number of applications compared to interviews and job offers?



**Disabled people**  
19.9 applications  
3.4 interviews  
1 job offer



**Non-disabled employees**  
7.9 applications  
2.4 interviews  
1.3 job offer

## Qualifications

Compared to non-disabled people a significantly higher proportion of disabled people had no formal academic or vocational qualifications. 2.2% of disabled people as opposed to 0.5% of non-disabled employees had no qualifications at all.

The Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey 2002 estimates that disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no qualifications. Our results bear this out and suggest that the disparity may be even larger.

Unfortunately this is not a surprising figure, as many disabled people, particularly older disabled people, did not receive an adequate education. Even in recent times many disabled people were considered uneducable or not worth educating and received little or no formal education at all.

**“It’s a sad fact that a lot of disabled people leave school with fewer (if any) qualifications than their non-disabled counterparts. I don’t think this is through lack of ability, I think it’s to do with not being pushed hard enough and low expectations.”**

Disabled respondent

No formal academic or vocational qualifications?



**Disabled people**  
2.2%

**Non-disabled employees**  
0.5%

# Getting a job

The first hurdle facing anyone looking for work is the recruitment process. We wanted to know what respondents considered were the barriers to recruiting disabled people and whether elements of the recruitment process, including qualifications and experience, the application form and the interview put disabled candidates at a disadvantage.

This section looks at:

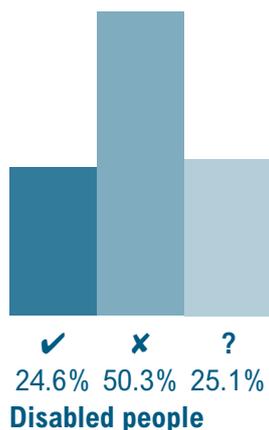
- Putting yourself forward
- Qualifications
- The application form
- Declaring your disability
- The interview process

**“Disabled people have to be twice as good as anyone else to even be considered for a job.”**

Disabled respondent



Disabled people don't apply for many jobs with my company.



## Putting yourself forward

26% of employers said that one of the things that prevented them employing disabled people is that disabled people don't apply for jobs with their company.

**“No disabled person has applied for any vacancy in the eight years I've been here. I don't know why not.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

Almost a quarter of disabled people agreed that disabled people don't apply for many jobs. Disabled respondents mentioned a number of issues that they felt stopped disabled people putting themselves forwards. The main issues identified were a lack of confidence, lack of access to information and advice and fear of yet another rejection.

**“I think the main barriers are that disabled people's expectations are lower because of bad experiences they have had. Also help with finding work is difficult for disabled people to access; often they don't know where to get help from.”**

Disabled respondent

As well as a lack of confidence in their own abilities, a number of disabled people said that the way job adverts were phrased put them off:

**“Job adverts tend to oversell jobs which makes me think I don't have the qualities and experience necessary so I don't apply.”**

Disabled respondent

But a bigger issue was the knock to people's self-confidence of continual rejection. One respondent had made over 300 job applications and not been offered a single interview. Other people regularly got to the interview stage but never got the job.

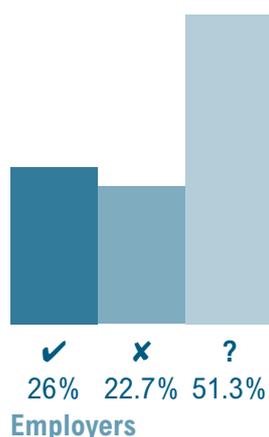
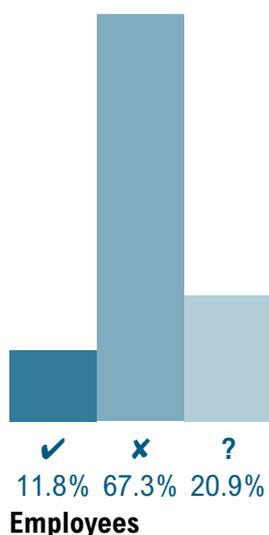
**“After a while continually getting rejected really starts to get you down. Sometimes I feel that I just can't face another interview because I know the result will always be the same. 'Thanks for coming, but no thanks.' ”**

Disabled respondent

Over half of all disabled respondents and employees disagreed that disabled people didn't apply for many jobs. However, employers didn't share these perceptions with the majority not knowing whether disabled people applied for jobs with their company or not. This suggests that many employers don't monitor the number of disabled applicants they get despite the fact that this is a statutory duty.

**“There is a lack of commitment to encouraging disabled people to apply for jobs and no positive action such as guaranteed interview schemes to combat years of discrimination.”**

Employer, voluntary sector



- ✓ = Agree
- ✗ = Disagree
- ? = Don't know

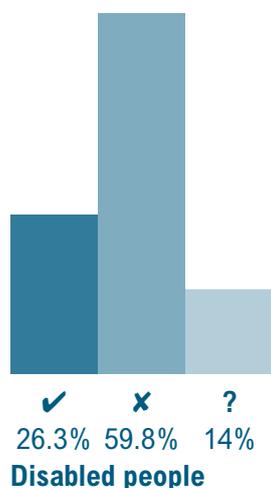
## ***Top tips for employers***

- Continual rejection damages anybody's confidence. Statements on job adverts like 'we particularly welcome disabled applicants' mean disabled people know that your company is serious about employing disabled people.
- Think about where you advertise your vacancies. Newspaper adverts aren't accessible to all disabled people so placing your advert in a number of places e.g. in the newspaper, online and in specialist disability publications (such as Disability Now) helps to ensure as many people as possible see it. If you have to advertise only in newspapers make sure the vital information e.g. the job title, salary and company's contact details are in larger print.
- Employers have a statutory duty to monitor the number of job applications they receive from disabled applicants. If you don't know who's applying you won't know where you have a problem. If you don't receive many applications consider how you could reach disabled people more effectively (see above tips).

**“Although we don't want to discriminate against disabled people, we haven't done anything very proactive as a company to target job adverts – perhaps this explains the current situation.”**

Employer, service industry

My company is prevented from employing disabled people because disabled people tend to have inadequate qualifications/work experience.



## Are you experienced?

Although disabled people are statistically more likely to have no formal qualifications we were interested to know if disabled people were perceived to have poorer qualifications and whether this was a barrier to employing them.

Employers were again uncertain. A few said that lack of qualifications was an issue that prevented them recruiting disabled people but again most didn't know.

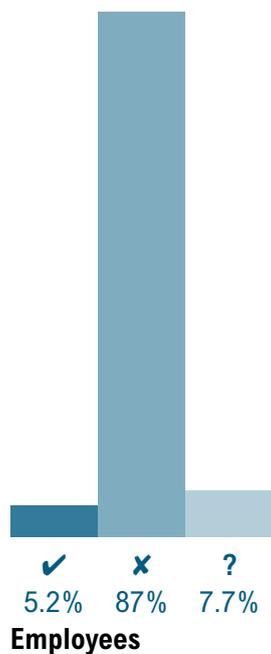
**“Disabled people often do have a lack of formal qualifications and work experience and lack of ways of getting that experience.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

Most employees thought it wasn't an issue with 87% disagreeing with the statement. However, disabled people were less adamant. Though the majority disagreed, over a quarter thought qualifications were a barrier to getting work. This may reflect disabled people's own experiences of trying to access education and training.

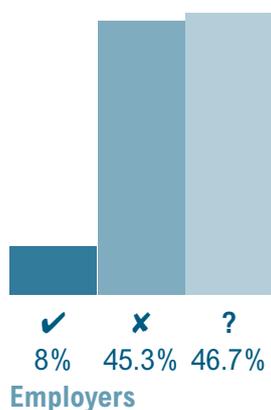
**“When I was at school in the 50s and 60s it was not considered worthwhile encouraging me to study for qualifications as I would probably be unemployed. My qualifications were gained later in life which sometimes makes employers suspicious.”**

Disabled respondent



### Top tips for employers

- Think about the skills and abilities needed for the jobs you advertise. Do they require formal qualifications or just particular competencies that candidates could demonstrate in other ways?
- Could a test or exercise at the interview be used to prove academic competence rather than relying on qualifications?
- Can you provide training on the job to enable people to acquire additional skills and experience?



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

# The application form

Application forms provide the employer’s first impression of a candidate. As well as a candidate’s experience, handwriting, spelling, grammar and writing skills, and in some cases IT skills, can all be judged from the application form. As such they can have an important effect on a candidate’s chances of reaching the interview stage.

Disabled people are more likely to be on a low income and to have had a poorer education. They are also more likely to be out of work at the time of application. People with visual impairments might not be able to read the application form if it’s not in an appropriate format. We wanted to know if employers felt that disabled candidates’ job applications were a barrier to them taking on disabled employees.

15% of employers thought the application form was an issue.

**“As a manager it seems that some application forms do not demonstrate how the candidate meets the person specification adequately and as a result do not show themselves to be wholly suitable for the job – this is regardless of whether the person has a disability but may be more likely if they have not had any help or guidance in applying for jobs.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

10% of disabled people agreed that this was a reason why employers don’t employ disabled people. A number cited their personal experiences of difficulties with the application process

**“(I have Repetitive Strain Injury) and I have had a disability organisation and a local authority refuse to accept an application on tape.”**

Disabled respondent

**“Application forms should be able to be filled in by typing them because if they are handwritten and the disabled person doesn’t write well they are at a disadvantage as soon as the employer picks it up.”**

Disabled respondent

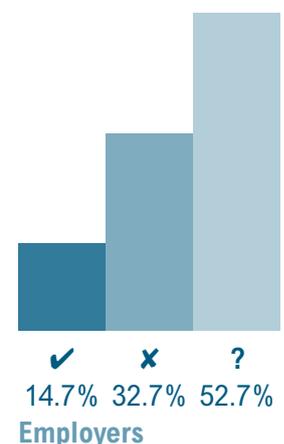
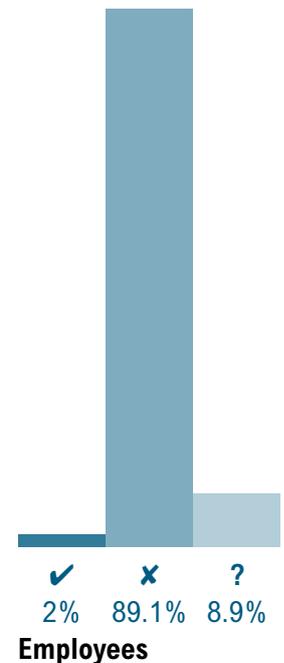
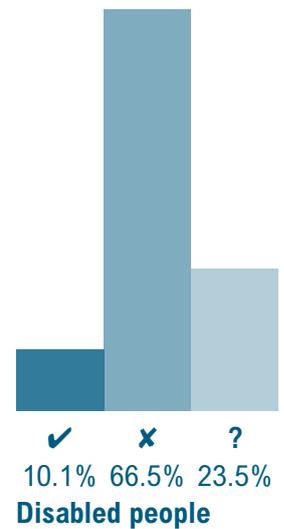
Though this is a minority of respondents it demonstrates that some employers and disabled people do see the application process as an impediment to disabled people getting work. A number of employers suggested adjustments to ensure the process was fair demonstrating that they are aware that some application forms are not necessarily a fair way to judge a person’s ability.

**“Applicants with learning problems should be helped filling out application forms as the presentation of a form should not reflect work ability.”**

Employer, recruitment sector

Again a lot of employers didn’t know either way, suggesting they aren’t doing a great deal to monitor the accessibility of their application process or encourage applications from disabled people.

My company is prevented from employing disabled people because disabled people don’t fill in job applications very well.



## Anything to declare?

Although we didn't ask disabled people if they declared their impairment/condition on their job applications a number of people brought this up as an issue. The comments suggest that there is still a significant level of prejudice against disabled applicants.

**“I have a lot of experience in one field and the bulk of my recent job applications were in that area. The 1st batch stated I was disabled and I got no responses. I didn't mention my disability in the 2nd batch and then everyone wanted to see me.”**

Disabled respondent

**“My current and previous jobs have been disability-related. I find that I only get interviews if I don't declare my disability during the application process or if the job is disability-related.”**

Disabled respondent

Unfortunately some employers suggested that this was a common view amongst recruiters.

**“Recruiting managers see disabled candidates in a negative light when compared to an able-bodied candidate.”**

Employer, media sector

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Make sure your application form is clear and straightforward and conforms to the RNIB's clear print guidelines (see Useful Contacts at the end of this report for details).
- Make sure your application forms and information about the post are available in alternative formats including Braille, tape, large print and electronic.
- Make sure your application form asks about disability. Disabled people shouldn't have to hide their impairment or condition so give people somewhere to tell you about any additional needs they may have straightaway.
- Monitor the applications (and any comments) you receive so you can identify any problems with the process and improve it where necessary.

## Up close and (too) personal

Once again the majority of employers didn't know whether disabled people perform well at interview. A number, however, felt that interviewers do discriminate against disabled applicants because of ignorance and the notion that someone won't be able to do the job if they don't do it in the usual way.

**“I often think people interviewing don't understand what a particular disability means, and over-emphasise its restrictions. They then play safe and avoid appointing a person with a disability.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

Interviews give candidates the opportunity to sell themselves to employers in person. The interview is also an opportunity for employers to gauge the suitability of a particular applicant for the post.

Although interviews are supposed to be fairly mechanical processes, they are invariably influenced by the attitudes and expectations of the interviewers. Candidates are not only judged on their abilities but on factors like personality and how well they will 'fit in' with other employees.

**“I attended an interview where the employer told me that he would be okay with someone different because his wife had a relation who was born with his brain the wrong way round so he (the employer) was able to cope with someone a bit strange.”**

Disabled respondent

An interviewer's attitude towards a disabled interviewee is not the only issue. It's important to remember that disabled interviewees may be put at a disadvantage if the style of the interview doesn't take their impairment into consideration.

13% of disabled respondents thought disabled people don't get jobs because employers think they don't perform well at interview. Many disabled people have had bad experiences of interviews and felt they were put at a disadvantage compared to other candidates because of the way the interview was conducted.

**“I am hard of hearing and my interview was held in a noisy room. It was embarrassing to repeatedly ask to have questions repeated and it affected my confidence and performance.”**

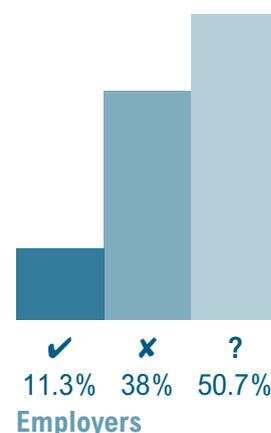
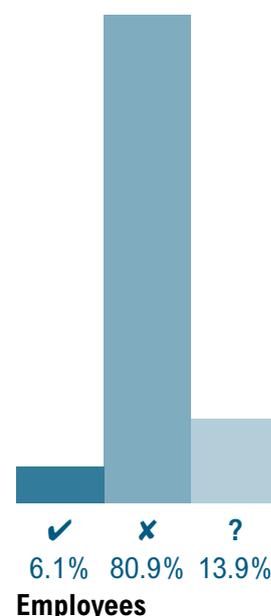
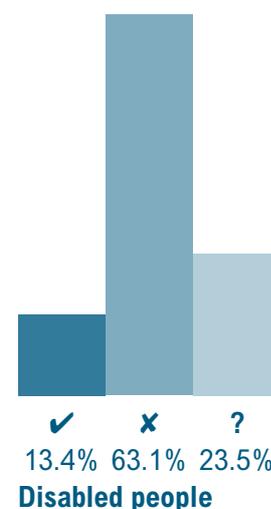
Disabled respondent

**“Organisations don't think. Despite my mentioning my back and displaced knee problems I was asked to climb four flights of stairs to an interview (for a university disability officer!)”**

Disabled respondent

Many disabled people also felt that interviewers asked intrusive and inappropriate questions about their impairment. Interviewers often seem to ask unnecessary questions about how a disabled person will manage certain tasks dwelling on the perceived 'problems' of their impairment rather than the person's abilities and skills.

My company is prevented from employing disabled people because disabled people don't perform well at interview.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

**“The first ten minutes of a recent interview was spent with the Chair ‘quizzing’ me about my use of a personal assistant, voice-activated PC etc.”**

Disabled respondent

Others felt that employers interviewed them as a token gesture but always gave the job to someone else.

**“Sometimes it feels like I am the token disabled person who everyone interviews but no-one wants to employ.”**

Disabled respondent

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Consider whether your interview process might put certain disabled candidates at a disadvantage. If it does you need to alter your interview technique so as to be fair to all candidates.
- When inviting candidates to interview ask them if they have any particular access requirements relating to the interview e.g. wheelchair access, a British Sign Language interpreter.
- Difference can be daunting. But doing a job differently doesn't mean doing it less well. If you are unsure whether a disabled applicant will be able to perform certain tasks ask them to tell you about aspects of the job they might find difficult and if there are any adjustments or equipment that would make it easier. Most disabled people have their tried and tested techniques and in most cases a few simple adjustments will enable that person to do the job equally well.
- Disabled people live with and manage their impairments on a daily basis. Asking people how they get out of bed or do other things unrelated to work is intrusive and unnecessary.
- Think about having a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants who meet the person specification.

# Access

The built environment creates many unnecessary barriers that can prevent disabled people playing a full part in our society. Access is an important consideration when employing disabled people. If the environment isn't accessible to a disabled employee they cannot do their job effectively.

This section looks at:

- Physical access
- Sensory access
- Cost of making adjustments
- Health and safety
- Transport

**“Most things can be made accessible given a bit of imagination.”**

Disabled respondent



My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because my company's premises are not accessible to people with physical impairments.

## Physical access

Nearly 23% of employers said their premises would be a barrier to employing people with physical impairments, while 37% said they wouldn't. Employers whose premises had access problems cited issues like unhelpful landlords, old buildings and geographical features like steep hills as barriers to the making their workplace accessible to disabled employees.

**“We have a serious issue with our building landlord... The whole building is not geared to be fully accessible, it needs better access, user-friendly fire doors (i.e. ones that don't weigh a ton!), hand rails and of course accessible toilet facilities.”**

Employer

In comparison, a massive 86% of disabled people felt that physical access barriers prevented many companies employing disabled people. Again people drew on their own experiences of trying to access the workplace.

**“I had one job where I had to work alone in a tiny office because my department was upstairs and there was no lift.”**

Disabled respondent

Thirty per cent of employees felt that their company's premises would be inaccessible to disabled employees while 68% said that physical access wasn't a barrier. Only 2.5% didn't know if their premises were accessible suggesting that employees have a much better understanding of what constitutes an accessible environment than employers. A number of employees also identified staff training as a barrier to access.

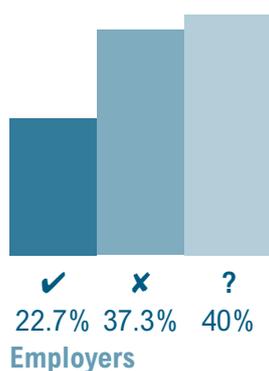
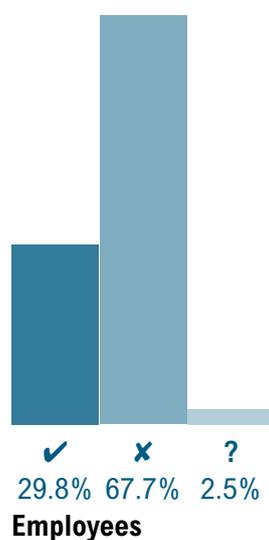
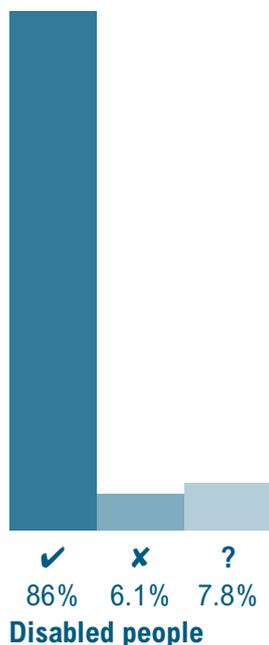
**“To get access to a particular part of the building, a wheelchair user would need a chair lift, but only one person can operate it (when it's not his day off!!) Nobody else has been trained!”**

Employee

An alarming 40% of employers didn't know whether their company's premises would prevent them employing someone with a physical impairment. This indicates that there is still widespread ignorance amongst employers about physical access barriers and how to remove them. Such ignorance on the relatively simple issue of access to the physical environment suggests that employers are still unaware of the barriers disabled people face daily.

**“Many workplaces purport to be accessible and when asked most employers usually say their premises are. The old chestnut ‘there's only a couple of steps’ and ‘yes we do have an accessible toilet’ is just from their view of the world. To a wheelchair user the couple of steps are insurmountable barriers to the workplace. The assumption that bars coming out of the wall make the loo accessible is what I usually come across. I've seen loos with more bars than the ape house at London Zoo!”**

Disabled respondent



Encouragingly some employers were aware of the physical and psychological barriers that poor access causes and that access is not just about ramps and lifts.

**“Although my company’s premises are almost all accessible for people with a physical disability it is often difficult or somewhat humiliating (e.g. having to enter the main building via the back door used for the bins).”**

Employer, voluntary sector

**“Although our building is accessible it can often be made not so by thoughtlessness and ignorance – boxes left in passages, overcrowded rooms etc.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Contrary to popular belief creating an accessible environment is not as difficult as it seems. It just takes a bit of common sense. If you aren't sure if something will be accessible to someone, ask them. Disabled people encounter unnecessary access barriers every day and are best placed to tell you how to remove them.
- Access does not just mean ramps and lifts, though level access is an important part of creating an accessible environment. An access barrier can be anything that prevents a disabled person participating as an equal or being unnecessarily reliant on someone else for help.
- Most access alterations can be made quickly and cheaply and the majority of alterations such as improved signage, better lighting and level access also benefit non-disabled staff and make the working environment safer for everyone.
- If you are unsure about how to improve access to your premises you can get your premises professionally audited by someone trained in how to create a fully accessible environment (see Useful Contacts at the end of this report for details of Centre for Accessible Environments).

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because my company's premises are not accessible to people with sensory impairments.

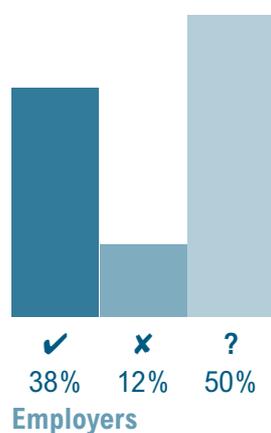
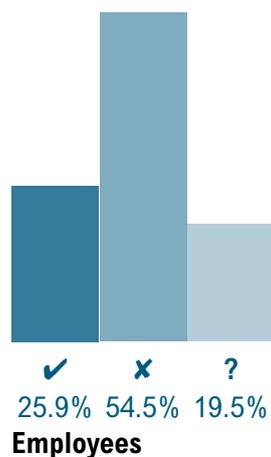
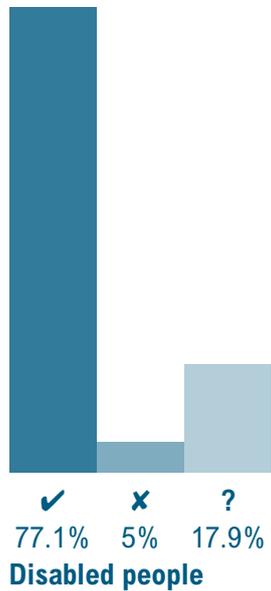
## Sensory access

Unsurprisingly perhaps, ignorance seems even more extensive when it comes to access for people with sensory impairments. Half of all employers surveyed didn't know whether their premises would be inaccessible to people with sensory impairments, suggesting there is a need to educate people about the barriers that people with visual and hearing impairments face and how to remove them.

**“Our building – which is rented – is accessible to people with mobility problems. However, I don't know enough about the specific needs of people with sensory disabilities to know what – if any – modifications we'd need to make.”**

Employer, service industry

Again, a very high proportion of disabled respondents felt that many workplaces weren't accessible to people with sensory impairments and this was a barrier to employing disabled people. However, even amongst disabled people there was a degree of uncertainty with almost 20% of respondents unsure whether most premises did meet sensory impaired people's access needs. This suggests that everyone would benefit from greater awareness of how to make the working environment accessible to people with sensory impairments.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

### Top tips for employers

- Again, identifying the majority of access barriers just takes a bit of common sense. But disabled people are the experts so if you aren't sure if something will be accessible to someone, ask them.
- Clear sign-posting, high visibility markings and clear workspaces and corridors should already be accepted good practice in workplaces as they make the environments safer for all employees. Textphones not only enable someone with a hearing impairment to use the telephone but also enable other hearing impaired people to contact your business.
- If you are unsure about how to improve access to your premises you can get your premises professionally audited by someone trained in how to create a fully accessible environment (see Useful Contacts at the end of this report for details of Centre for Accessible Environments or contact RNIB or RNID).

# Money, money, money

Creating an accessible working environment isn't just about physical adjustments. It also means ensuring that a person has the equipment they need to do their job. A lot of emphasis is often put on the cost of making access adjustments. It's true that some physical adjustments can be expensive. Installing lifts is not cheap and in some older buildings it's not possible. However, with the exception of major building projects the majority of access improvements can be made cheaply and easily.

The results suggest that there is still a prevailing view amongst employers that employing disabled people is prohibitively expensive.

**“One of the biggest barriers to disabled people getting employment is the belief that it's not cost-effective.”**

Disabled respondent

Over 44% of employers didn't know whether the cost of adjustments would prevent them employing a disabled person while 45% were convinced that in some cases they definitely wouldn't employ a disabled person because the cost would be prohibitive.

**“We would be very happy to employ someone with a disability. But we might find it difficult to pay for specialist equipment if it were needed.”**

Employer, education sector

Some 34% of disabled people felt that employers did see cost as a barrier to employing disabled people, while 48% felt that cost wasn't a barrier but a number of disabled respondents felt that employers often used cost as an excuse for not employing disabled people.

**“My disability (RSI) would require an employer to provide equipment to help me do my job. This may put employers off giving disabled applicants a fair chance.”**

Disabled respondent

**“Whilst not DIFFICULT many organisations seem UNWILLING to adapt work environments.”**

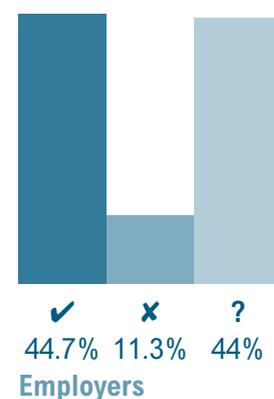
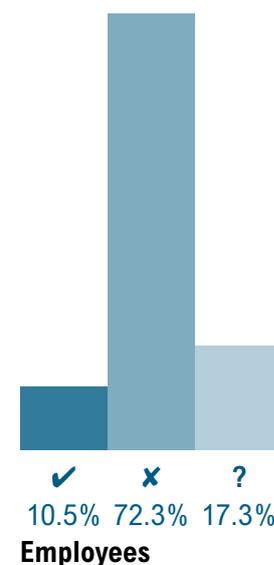
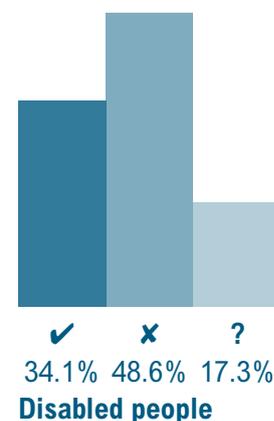
Disabled respondent

The majority of employees felt that cost was not a barrier to employing disabled people. In contrast, some people seemed very aware that disabled people cost more to employ and there was some uncertainty amongst employees, with 17% not knowing whether companies could afford to make adjustments.

**“I think maybe it would be a good idea if disabled people could sell themselves as offering additional value over and above the job they are applying for... In the mind of the employer, this could offset any costs that would be incurred by employing them.”**

Employee

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because my company/organisation cannot afford to pay for alterations and adjustments or the personal assistance that disabled employees might need.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

Though in reality the bulk of adjustments are small and cheap many employers still see adjustments as major physical changes. Such a view not only suggests that employers still hold a very narrow view of what constitutes disability – in fact only 7% of disabled people are wheelchair users – but also that a significant proportion of employers aren't aware of the Access to Work scheme.

**“Most employers don't seem to know about Access to Work which will pay for the things a disabled person might need to do their job.”**

Disabled respondent

**“Until we employed a disabled staff member I wasn't aware of Access to Work. This needs greater publicity so that employers are aware of assistance.”**

Employee

The Access to Work (AtW) scheme provides advice and practical support to disabled people and their employers. As well as giving advice and information to disabled people and employers AtW may also pay a grant, through JobCentre Plus, towards any extra employment costs (over £300) that result from disability. AtW can fund most of the cost of specialist equipment, personal assistance, transport to and from a disabled person's place of work and adaptations to the workplace.

Only 11% of employers were clear that they would be able to afford any adjustments suggesting that awareness of the Access to Work scheme is very low amongst employers in general.

**“We are aware of the Access to Work scheme and would investigate this to help pay for any equipment a member of staff needed.”**

Employer, media sector

Amongst those who thought they couldn't afford to make adjustments were a number of smaller employers. This highlights the importance of raising awareness of the Access to Work scheme particularly amongst smaller employers. Small and medium businesses make up the bulk of the UK's employers and it is vital that they know employing a disabled person will not automatically result in them incurring significant additional costs.

**“It would depend on what assistance/alterations were needed, as we are a small organisation. I would be unwilling to pay out for special equipment during the compulsory three-month probation period. If there were a service that would lend the equipment for free until the employee was confirmed in post it might help. Even £200 can impinge on tight budgets.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

Disabled respondents were very aware that many employers didn't know about Access to Work. Concerns were raised that not enough was being done to advertise the scheme amongst businesses and that this was harming disabled people's chances of getting jobs. There were also concerns about the time and effort it takes to get Access to Work funding.

**“Access to Work can take ages to arrange and many people are not aware of it.”**

Disabled respondent

### **Becoming disabled**

Although we didn't ask specifically about people's experience of becoming disabled whilst working a number of disabled people raised it as an issue.

The majority of disabled people are not born with their impairments but acquire them later in life. As a result many companies are likely to have a member of staff who becomes disabled whilst working for them. Many disabled people reported being treated unfairly and even summarily dismissed after they acquired their impairment suggesting that many employers still hold a very negative view of disabled people.

**“When I became disabled my employer gave me the choice of staying in work but taking sick leave until a case could be made that I must be replaced because I was a drag on my colleagues or taking ill-health retirement immediately. What a choice! I now do much the same work unpaid as a volunteer.”**

Disabled respondent

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Don't make assumptions about what adjustments or equipment a disabled employee might need. Everyone is different so make sure you talk to each person individually about what they might need.
- Not all adjustments cost a lot. The majority can be made quickly and cheaply.
- Many adjustments, such as a textphone or level access, also make it easier for disabled customers as well as disabled employees to access your business. Accessible premises and a 'can do' approach to employing disabled people also means that if an employee becomes disabled at any point you will not need to make any major adjustments.
- Find out about how to access the Access to Work scheme (see Useful Contacts at the end of this report for more details).
- Talk to other companies about what they do to accommodate their disabled employees.

## *Good practice case study – acquiring your impairment*

### **Kevin's experience**

I joined YJL Construction Ltd (then Lovell construction) in December 1996 as an able-bodied General Foreman. Within a year I was promoted to Site Manager. From 1996 until my road traffic accident in May 2000 I was working on Railway Stations refurbishment. After my accident I spent six months in hospital of which three months was at Stanmore Hospital in the Spinal Unit. My injury is a T11 complete spinal injury this means I am a wheelchair user. YJL contractually only had to pay me for 13 weeks sick pay but continued to pay me for this duration. In October 2000 my HR manager and a Director of YJL visited me in hospital to find out what I thought I could do for the company when I was able to return to work. This is forward-thinking by YJL to see where I would now fit in with the company and also what I thought I could do for them.

I now work as Training Co-ordinator, working from home. I also have some meetings at Canary Wharf where we have some desks in one of the LUL buildings. These are wheelchair-friendly with access and toilets. Also I can park my car in one of the car parks, as I cannot use the transport system. I am at present adapting my bungalow, which I bought last year where one of my rooms will be used as my office. YJL are supplying me with desks, drawer units and some chairs.

I think YJL are a very forward-thinking company and more aware than most about disabled requirements. As a disabled person you need to be flexible and be prepared for change and compromise. YJL are not your typical employer when it comes to disabled requirements as the field that YJL work in is construction and with all the regulations, and parts of the building regulations cover disabled issues which YJL have to work to.

If it was not for YJL keeping me employed I would not be able to be as independent as I am as I have bought a bungalow to live in on my own. My life would be very different if it was not for YJL's support. I have been told by my project manager that my prospects should not be affected by my disability in the future.

### **YJL Construction said about employing Kevin:**

YJL Construction did not make substantial adjustments. As Kevin had previous service prior to acquiring his disability he understood the running of our company. We had a specific commercial need that his skills could fill.

We would advise other employers to not just scratch the surface but look beyond people's disability. If you are able as a Company to find a worthwhile position where it is safe for someone to work they must be considered.

## Health and safety

Another issue that is often raised around employing disabled people is health and safety regulations. 15% of employers felt that health and safety regulations would prevent them employing a disabled person and a further 41% didn't know if this would be an issue.

**“I worry about health and safety issues. We're such a small outfit we have no specialist HR staff or similar and could have problems in emergencies.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

Encouragingly 44% of employers felt that health and safety regulations wouldn't prevent them employing a disabled person and a number felt that having a disabled employee had actually improved the standard of health and safety in their workplace.

**“Having a blind employee meant Health and Safety at the office was shaken up for the good – files used to be left in corridors but much tidying took place.”**

Employer

Disabled respondents however seemed to think that health and safety does prevent companies employing disabled people and 30% felt health and safety regulations were a barrier to getting work. This may be a result of personal experience of health and safety regulations being used as an excuse for being refused access.

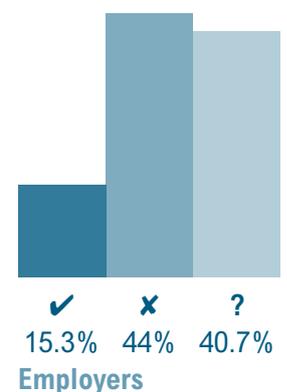
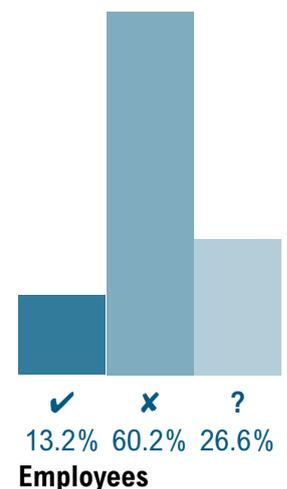
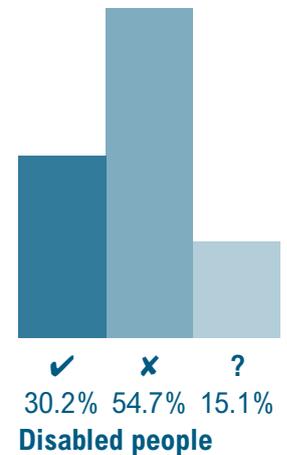
**“Potential employers often think about the safety issues of employing disabled people and this is where disability equality training is needed.”**

Disabled respondent

In the vast majority of work environments it is perfectly possible to provide for health and safety in a way that does not discriminate against disabled people. If conducted properly risk assessments can help to counter discrimination but if misapplied they can help to reinforce it. It's important to include the disabled employee when making health and safety assessments to ensure you use their expertise and consider a range of possible adjustments.

There are a few situations where health and safety makes employing some disabled people difficult. However these situations tend to be related to very specific job roles and should not be considered proof that health and safety makes employing disabled people in general more difficult.

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because health and safety regulations make employing disabled people difficult.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Following the correct health and safety procedures usually helps to make the working environment more accessible for disabled employees and safer for everyone.
- Employers do not have to make reasonable adjustments if these will contravene health and safety requirements, however most working environments can be made both accessible and safe with a bit of thought and consultation. If you are concerned about health and safety issues with regard to a disabled employee make sure you discuss it with them and consider the whole range of potential adjustments.
- Except in very specific circumstances health and safety regulations do not make it difficult to employ disabled people. Everyone's health and safety needs are different and every staff member should have an individual assessment of their workspace and duties to ensure they are working safely.
- Emergency and evacuation procedures should apply to all staff including disabled employees. You can contact your local fire brigade or the Disability Rights Commission for advice on this.

# Getting to work

The survey attempted to get an idea of how aware employers and employees were of the access barriers disabled people face on a daily basis. We asked whether they thought the difficulty some disabled people had accessing public transport might make employing a disabled person more difficult.

Nearly 74% of disabled people were clear that the inaccessibility of public transport was a barrier to getting to work.

**“Transport in London is getting better but it would be impossible for me to live anywhere else because public transport in the rest of the country is so bad.”**

Disabled respondent

**“Employers aren’t very open to requests to travel outside the rush hour.”**

Disabled respondent

In contrast, most employees didn’t think public transport would be a problem, suggesting that many non-disabled people aren’t aware that public transport isn’t very accessible to disabled people or think that most disabled people have other ways of getting to work.

The employers surveyed echoed this view. 35% thought it wouldn’t be a problem while an additional 45% didn’t know either way. 21% of employers did appreciate the barriers transport can create for disabled employees demonstrating that awareness is increasing.

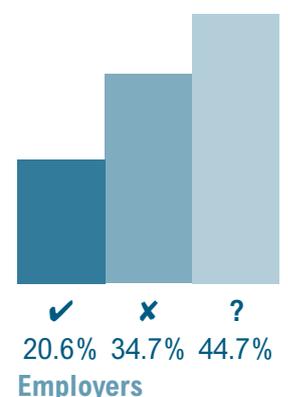
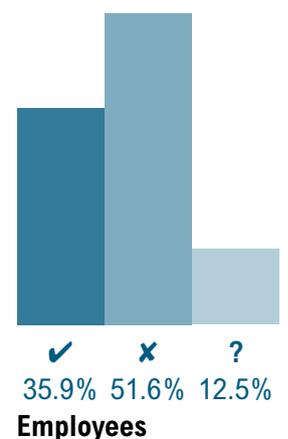
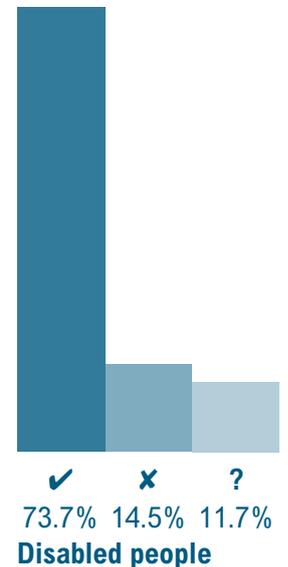
**“Barriers include poor access to public transport and a lack of parking for disabled staff.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

## Top tips for employers

- If public transport is inaccessible to some of your employees consider writing to the Council or your local MP to complain.
- Be flexible about start and finish times for employees who have difficulty using public transport. It’s much easier for wheelchair users to use public transport outside the rush hour.
- Find out if your disabled employees are eligible for assistance with getting to and from work from Access to Work.
- Provide parking spaces for disabled employees. If you do not have a disabled parking bay for your office you can apply to the Council to have one installed.
- Ensure non-disabled staff and clients do not abuse the disabled parking system.

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because public transport is not accessible so disabled people can’t get to my offices/place of business.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

## *Good practice case study – access*

### **James' experience**

I was looking to change jobs and had registered with a recruitment agency specialising in the financial services sector in the South West. Their offices were inaccessible to wheelchair users but they were happy to arrange a meeting outside the office to talk things over. Following this they contacted me to ask if I was interested in an opportunity that had come up at Clerical Medical Investment Group Ltd. My first consideration was obviously –‘Can I get in the building?’ I could and so went for an interview the following day.

A few days later I got a call to offer me the job, which I accepted. My employers asked me to meet with them before I started work to discuss what help I might need and make sure things were in place. As there were a couple of wheelchair users already working there, things were set up in a pretty accessible way which really impressed me. There are lots of small adjustments that make life so much easier – an infra red system to lift the barrier into the car park means I don't have to wait for someone to come along and push a button everyone else can reach; electric doors from the car park into the building. I think the only specific adjustment that was made was to the height of my desk so that my wheelchair fits underneath it.

The company has just announced that they will be building a brand new office in three years time in Bristol. The CEO is keen that I and disabled colleagues are involved in making sure the building is accessible for all employees. Hopefully it will be an award-winning new building!

### **HBOS Financial Services said about employing James:**

“As a major employer in the area we are actively seeking to increase the number of applications we receive from people with a disability. We can draw on positive experiences of the contribution made to our business by such members of staff, and we are delighted that James found the recruitment experience so positive.”

# Attitudes

Access issues, cost and legal restrictions clearly play a part in making companies reluctant to employ disabled people. However, such issues are not the only barriers preventing disabled people getting work.

It's easy to underestimate the power of attitudes. Most people like to think that they don't discriminate but preconceptions and stereotypes influence our decision-making all the time.

In this section we look at:

- Fear of the unknown
- Staff attitudes
- Client/customer attitudes
- Time off due to sickness
- Disabled people's pace of work
- Disabled people's support needs
- Job suitability

**“I've come across slow, lazy, sickness prone people with no disability at all. Fitting in is a matter of personality.”**

Employee



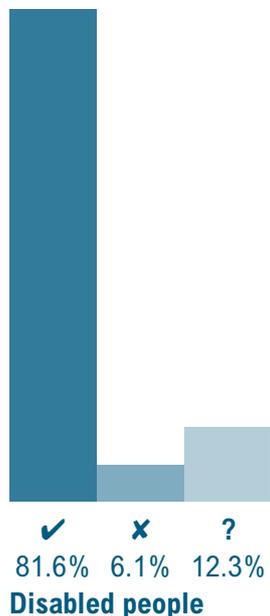
My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because I've never employed a disabled person before and so don't know what to expect.

## Fear of the unknown

Society's view of disabled people is not a very sophisticated one. People are highly influenced by the way disabled people are portrayed in the media. Typically disabled people fit into one of two categories. They are victims – weak, helpless, sufferers who should be pitied and protected. Or, they are brave – battling against all odds, their achievements made incredible by their 'lack' of something most people take for granted.

Despite the fact that there are 8.6 million disabled people in the UK many non-disabled people still don't know any disabled people and even fewer non-disabled people work with a disabled person. We wanted to know if people's willingness to employ a disabled person was affected by whether they already knew a disabled person.

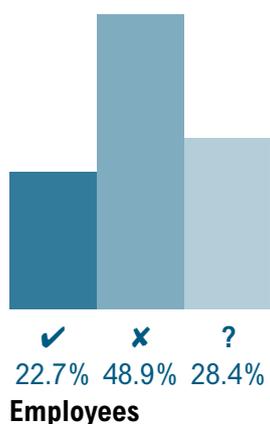
Nearly 19% of employers said they might not employ a disabled person because they'd never employed a disabled person before and so didn't know what to expect. A further 45% of employers didn't know if this would prevent them employing a disabled person.



**“My sister-in-law is disabled and would be an asset to any employer, but unfortunately people are too prejudiced to see beyond the disability. They make assumptions that if somebody is physically disabled they also have learning difficulties, which prevents them from communicating for themselves. All rubbish of course, but sadly people don't meet many disabled people in everyday life, so ignorance accounts for most misunderstandings.”**

Employer, construction industry

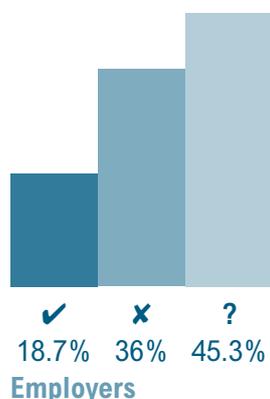
Disabled people felt very strongly that fear and prejudice were significant barriers to disabled people getting work. Nearly 82% of respondents agreed that fear of the unknown was a barrier to disabled people getting work.



**“I feel very strongly that disabled people are extremely undervalued. If employers would only look beyond the disability they would see that disabled people have a lot to offer and have the potential to be valuable members of the workforce.”**

Disabled respondent

Nearly 23% of employees agreed that this was a barrier and a further 28% weren't sure.



**“I have never worked with a disabled person before and have had very little contact with people with disabilities.”**

Employee

Anecdotal evidence suggests that companies that employ one disabled person are more likely to employ more. Taking on a disabled employee helps combat common misconceptions and generalisations about disability and disabled people. And debunking the myths around disability is vital if disabled people are to take their rightful place in society.

- ✓ = Agree
- ✗ = Disagree
- ? = Don't know

**“People do have preconceived ideas about disability and they only learn by experience. So we have to convince them. As more disabled people get into the workforce hopefully attitudes will change. I think legislation is making it easier all the time. Employers are more aware of our rights.”**

Disabled respondent

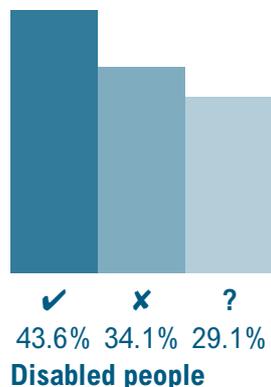
### ***Top tips for employers***

- Disabled people are people first and foremost. People’s impairments are part of them but by no means the only thing about them. Every person is different and someone’s impairment is as significant or insignificant as you want to make it.
- Employing disabled staff members is the easiest and quickest way to explode myths and stereotypes about disability and disabled people.
- If you are worried about employing a disabled person organise some disability equality training for you and your staff.
- Talk to other companies about their experience of employing disabled people.

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because my staff would find it difficult to accept and work with a disabled person.

## Peer pressure

Only 5% of employers said they wouldn't employ a disabled person because their staff would find it difficult to accept and work with them. However, an additional 41% didn't know if this would prevent them, suggesting that in some cases they would hesitate to employ a disabled person if they felt their employees might have difficulty accepting them.



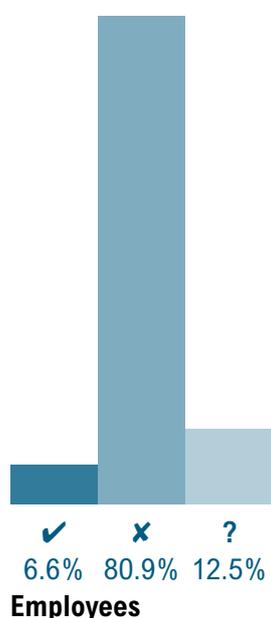
**“One barrier to employing a disabled person might be the staff’s perception of them being less able to do the job.”**

Employer, legal sector

Such a high level of uncertainty is alarming. Though only a handful of employers were willing to say that the attitudes of their staff would stop them appointing a disabled person, a significant number couldn't say that their decision would definitely not be influenced by discriminatory attitudes amongst their staff.

The fact that many employers might bow to the prejudice and ignorance of their staff and decide not to appoint a disabled person rather than challenge such views is perhaps the most worrying finding of this survey.

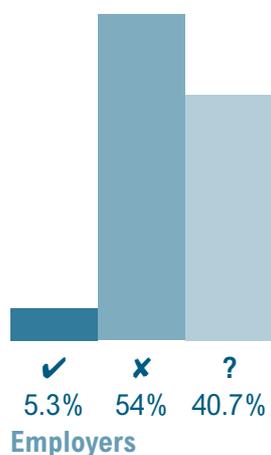
An alarming 44% of disabled respondents thought the fact that staff would find it difficult to accept and work with disabled people would stop a company employing a disabled person. A further 29% didn't know. This suggests that disabled people do not have very much faith in non-disabled people's ability to see disabled people as equals.



**“I have been turned down for employment on the basis that my disability would be too much of an inconvenience for my colleagues.”**

Disabled respondent

In contrast, 80.9% of employees didn't think that their company would let negative attitudes from staff stop them recruiting a disabled person. Whether this is a reflection of staff attitudes or a belief that their companies wouldn't tolerate discriminatory behaviour from staff is unclear but employees were very sure that staff attitudes wouldn't prevent disabled people getting work with their company.



**“Sometimes if the employer cannot handle the idea of employing a ‘different’ person they wrongly assume the rest of the staff won’t either.”**

Disabled respondent

**“Working in social housing you meet many different people from asylum seekers to the hearing impaired. Our workforce should reflect the local community.”**

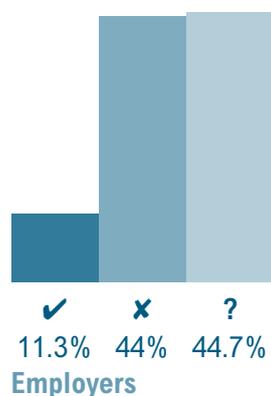
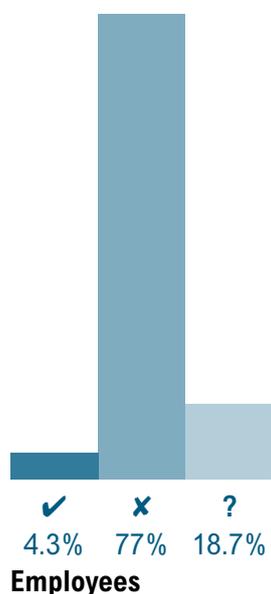
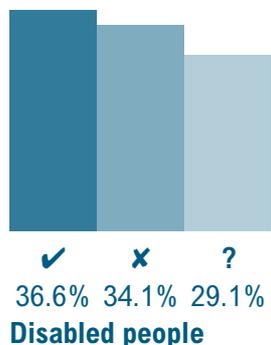
Employee

- ✓ = Agree
- ✗ = Disagree
- ? = Don't know

### ***Top tips for employers***

- If you feel staff might find working with a disabled person difficult you should provide compulsory disability equality training for all staff.
- Make it clear to staff, through posters, memos and other means, that your company does not tolerate discriminatory behaviour.
- Most access barriers are artificially created through poor design and lack of awareness. Encourage staff to take collective responsibility for ensuring that the workplace is accessible to all staff. The work environment should be everyone's responsibility.

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because my customers or clients wouldn't want to be served by or work with a disabled person.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

## The public face

11% of employers said they wouldn't employ a disabled person because their customers or clients wouldn't want to be served by or work with a disabled person. A further 45% said they didn't know if this would prevent them.

Again this is an alarming result. It implies that despite the increased importance being put on diversity within the workplace many employers still think disabled people do not present the right image for their company. A worrying number of employers seem willing not to employ a disabled person because of the prejudices of their clients or customers and the high proportion of don't knows suggests that many more employers are not willing to challenge such prejudice amongst their staff or their clients.

**“Bar and service work involves a lot of physical work in confined busy spaces often designed hundreds of years ago. We also deliver the product directly to the customer and however I feel about it I am sure there are customers who would be put off by disabled people serving them.”**

Employer, service industry

Disabled people were divided on this issue: 37% felt employers wouldn't employ a disabled person because their clients wouldn't like it or that disabled people didn't present the right image for the company.

**“Employers have a poor understanding of the public's attitude to disabled people. Generally I've found the public at large are quite happy to deal with me as the 'face of the company'... but it took a far-sighted company to realise that this would be the case.”**

Disabled respondent

**“The manager at the shop I worked in treated disabled people exactly like everyone else and expected other staff to fit in with them! But I think sometimes other staff and customers did have difficulty working with/being served by people with disabilities, especially people with mental health problems and learning disabilities.”**

Disabled respondent

But almost as many disabled people thought this wouldn't be a barrier suggesting that some disabled people think that such negative attitudes towards disability are changing.

The majority of employees thought public attitudes were not a barrier to employing disabled people. Although very few people thought public attitudes were a problem a significant proportion of respondents didn't know and their comments suggested that although they didn't think it should be true some people might still consider disabled people to be the wrong image for a company.

**“Sadly our client group may look upon a disabled solicitor or other member of staff negatively.”**

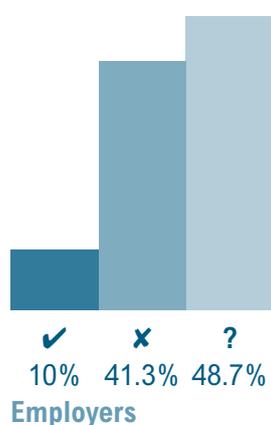
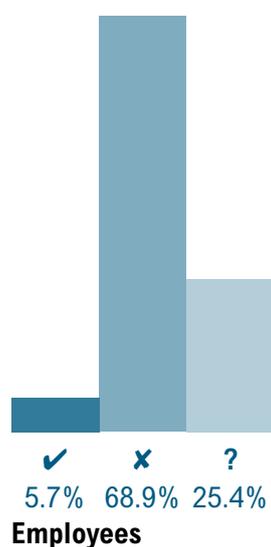
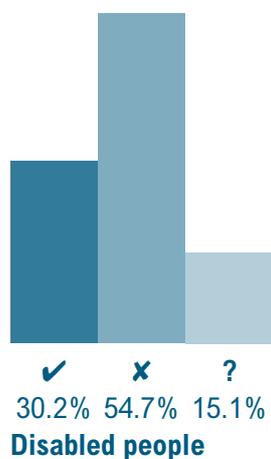
Employee

The survey results suggest that disabled people are still viewed as an employment risk and that equality of opportunity is not considered to be as important for disabled people as for other groups. After all it would be hard to imagine employers responding in the same way if asked about employing a woman or someone from a minority ethnic group.

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Provide disability equality training for all staff.
- Encourage staff members to challenge customers or clients who express views or opinions that are offensive or hurtful to disabled people.
- If you only employ disabled people in 'behind the scenes' roles, ask yourself why this is.
- Do you use images of disabled people in your advertising or recruitment material? If not, why not?

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because disabled people probably take more time off sick.



✓ = Agree  
 ✗ = Disagree  
 ? = Don't know

## Sick as a parrot

Disability and illness are often considered to be one and the same thing. Many non-disabled people continue to think of disabled people as ill people who need curing. Although some impairments and conditions can cause people pain or other symptoms many impairments have no impact on a person's health.

It is understandable that employers wouldn't want to employ someone who takes a lot of time off sick. But Employers' Forum on Disability statistics reveal that disabled people are in fact less likely to take time off sick than their non-disabled colleagues. As such we were interested in whether employers made an automatic connection between disabled people and illness. 41% of employers thought disabled people were no more likely to take time off sick than other employees and said this wouldn't affect their decision to employ a disabled person. However, 49% didn't know if this would affect their decision and 10% of employers said they might not employ a disabled person because disabled people take more time off sick.

**“Whilst an Occupational Health Report for a new member of staff implied that, due to her disability, she would be likely to take more time off than someone without a disability, this has not proved to be the case. Indeed the opposite is true!”**

Employer, public sector

The majority of employees felt that disabled people were no more likely to take time off sick than non-disabled colleagues were. Many commented that in their experience disabled people were in fact less likely to take time off sick.

**“The majority of people I enter sickness for are not disabled but it doesn't stop them taking lots of time off!”**

Employee

Most disabled people thought that preconceptions about sickness wouldn't be a barrier to employing disabled people. However, 30% felt that employers did perceive disabled people to be more likely to be ill suggesting that this is still a common myth disabled people have to combat when looking for jobs.

**“I have been questioned about my absence for sickness/medical appointments by several potential employers this year.”**

Disabled respondent

**“I think the distinction between someone with a permanent physical disability and a 'sick' person would be apparent to most sensible people. I think a lot of the preconceptions about disabled people needing help and care and time off sick is slowly going now and most employers understand this.”**

Disabled respondent

Illness aside, some disabled employees may need to take extra time off for reasons connected with their impairment or condition. Some people require regular medical check-ups or have to have their equipment assessed, adjusted or mended which can mean they need to take more time off than a non-disabled employee.

**“Time off for rehabilitation or treatment for disability should not be recorded as sickness but probably is. I think that it is realistic to expect this and accommodate time off.”**

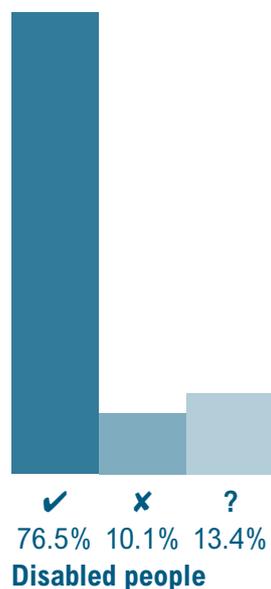
Employee

Although this may seem like a disincentive to employing disabled people it's worth remembering that all employees need to take time off on occasions. Many employees (such as those with children or other caring responsibilities) encounter 'emergencies' that can interrupt their work. Having a diverse workforce means recognising that work is not the only priority in people's lives and most people, including disabled people, need to do a bit of juggling now and again.

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Illness and disability are not necessarily related. Statistically, disabled people are less likely to take time off sick than non-disabled employees are.
- All staff require occasional time off and most benefit from flexible working conditions – disabled people are no different.
- For many disabled people there are extra costs and commitments (such as medical check-ups or getting equipment mended) associated with their impairment or condition that cannot be ignored. Employers need to recognise this and be flexible. For example can employees arrange for an engineer to mend their equipment while they're at work rather than having to wait at home?

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because disabled people probably work more slowly.



## Time is money

Another common perception of disabled people is that they work more slowly than non-disabled people do.

19% of employers might not appoint a disabled person because they are perceived to work more slowly. Employers from businesses that charge by the hour such as lawyers and designers were particularly concerned about taking on a disabled person for this reason.

**“We bill by the hour and have to pass charges on to clients.”**

Employer, legal sector

A further 46% of employers didn't know if this would prevent them. Obviously particular impairments can have an effect on a disabled person's work rate but this is by no means a universal truth for all disabled people.

In fact, people whose impairments might mean they work more slowly (such as people with some learning disabilities and mental health conditions and people with more severe physical impairments) should be entitled to support from a personal assistant through Access to Work to enable them to work at the same rate as their colleagues.

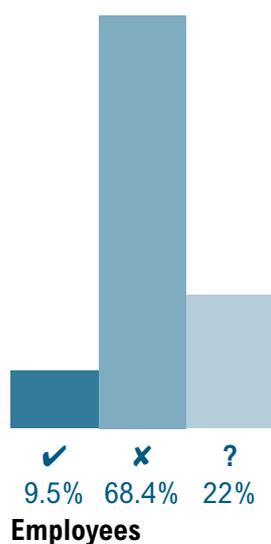
A number of employers recognised that disabled people do not automatically work more slowly and in fact many disabled people are faster and more efficient than their non-disabled colleagues are.

**“I have only worked with two disabled people – both blind. Their work rate outshone nearly all the others.”**

Employer

**“We are all different, with different abilities and needs. A non-disabled employee could work slower than a disabled employee.”**

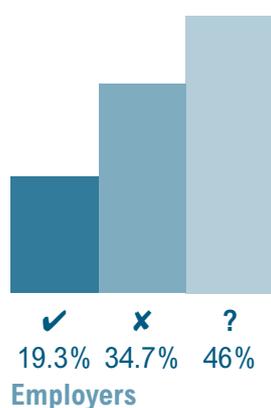
Employer, consultancy sector



Over 76% of disabled people agreed that employers did think that disabled people worked more slowly and that this perception was a barrier to disabled people getting work. Many disabled people felt that disabled people had to work harder in order to prove they were able to do the job.

**“If anything we tend to ‘over-compensate’ and try to be better than non-disabled people as an essential tool to overcoming the prejudice we experience. I am horrified whenever I make a mistake or forget something because I think my impairment will be blamed, rather than perfectly normal human fallibility.”**

Disabled respondent



- ✓ = Agree
- ✗ = Disagree
- ? = Don't know

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Don't assume a disabled employee will be less efficient or productive than a non-disabled person.
- For many disabled people a few small adjustments or a particular piece of equipment will enable them to do their job as efficiently as other employees. Just because someone does a job differently doesn't mean they will do it less well or less quickly.
- Some disabled people are entitled to support from a personal assistant to assist them in doing their job. If you think an employee would benefit from a support assistant you and the employee should approach Access to Work.

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because disabled people probably need more support from their managers and colleagues.

## A helping hand

Another common preconception amongst non-disabled people is that disabled people need a lot of help and support. Ironically many disabled people only have to request help because the environment does not take their impairment into consideration. If, for example, there were always a level access alternative to steps and if all information was provided in Braille many disabled people would be able to lead much more independent lives.

Almost 19% of employers said that they might not employ a disabled person because they probably needed more support from their managers and colleagues. A further 44% didn't know if this would prevent them employing a disabled person.



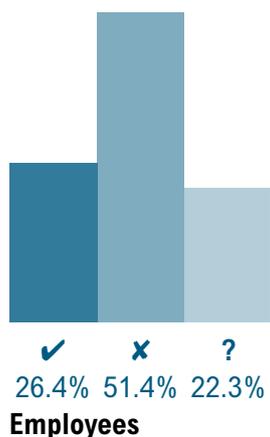
**“We might be prevented from employing a disabled person if their appointment would place an unacceptable burden on other staff which has been our experience in the past in some cases.”**

Employer, finance sector

Nearly 78% of disabled people felt that employers wouldn't employ a disabled person because they'd think they'd need more support from their colleagues or managers.

**“Employers tend to think that if you have a disability you are only able to perform menial tasks. This is my experience of employers and many employers need training in disability awareness. We can do most things but a bit of consideration and sometimes adaptations and patience is needed, that's all it takes to employ a disabled person.”**

Disabled respondent



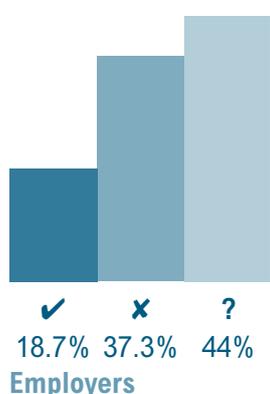
Over 37% of employers disagreed that disabled people need more help and support. Many employers' comments also reflect a willingness to provide additional support where it was necessary and an awareness that all disabled people are different and that systems and the work environment can make people more dependent on colleagues than they need to be.

**“I think disabled people can sometimes need more support from their managers. However, this is not to do with their capabilities but with trying to make inflexible systems work for everyone – equipment, hours, training etc.”**

Employer, voluntary sector

**“It depends on the individual's disability. We have some disabled people who require no support at all and work at the same level as those without a disability. I have worked with an employee who is severely disabled with cerebral palsy who, because of the nature of his disability, is unable to work at the same level and requires support over lunch periods and at social events otherwise he would be unable to eat. It has never caused a problem and his colleagues or I have always been more than happy to assist.”**

Employer, public sector



- ✓ = Agree
- ✗ = Disagree
- ? = Don't know

A number of disabled respondents commented on the prevailing attitude amongst many non-disabled people that says that access is the disabled person's problem. Removing access barriers from the work environment should be something everyone takes responsibility for.

**“My employer never seems to think about how I’m going to manage at business get-togethers and social functions. It’s always up to me to check things out and make adjustments.”**

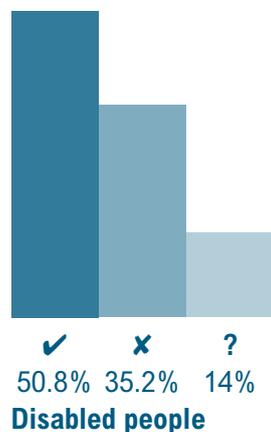
Disabled respondent

People's impairments can cause them difficulties but it is the access barriers and lack of awareness within the workplace that disable people. With the appropriate equipment, an accessible environment and positive attitudes from others a person's impairment can become insignificant. For example few people consider someone who is colour blind to be disabled – that's because we can arrange our environment so the person's colour blindness doesn't disadvantage them. In the same way there are many ways in which we can adapt our environment to make people's impairments or conditions insignificant.

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Do not assume that all disabled people need you to help them. If a person needs help they will ask for it.
- Consider whether your work environment makes disabled employees more dependent on their colleagues than they need to be. For example store things on low shelves so a wheelchair user can reach them without having to ask for help.
- If a disabled employee thinks they would benefit from a personal assistant to assist them in doing their job you and the employee should approach Access to Work to find out what they can provide.

My company/organisation might be prevented from employing a disabled person because the type of work my company/organisation does makes it difficult to employ disabled people.



## Careers advice

Encouragingly over 50% of employers disagreed that the type of work their company did would prevent them employing a disabled person.

However, 19% of employers did think the type of work their company did would prevent them employing disabled people and a further 31% didn't know. Although most respondents recognised that certain impairments would make some jobs very difficult, if not impossible, comments from employers indicate that people make a lot of assumptions about what disabled people are able to do.

Many people seemed to think that people with sensory impairments would be unable to perform office-based tasks like using the phone, reading documents or participating in meetings.

**“In a professional firm it is hard to see how a person with learning difficulties or with visual or aural impairment could work within the firm given the nature of the work including for the support staff (e.g. audio typing).”**

Employer, legal sector

Others thought disabled people in general wouldn't be able to work in restaurants or bars because the work would be too fast and physical.

**“The nature of our organisation is not conducive to disabled employees – it's a fast-paced service environment with a high level of customer turnover. Our employees must be able-bodied, as the bulk of all our staff are waiters and chefs. However, if we were an office-based company I wouldn't hesitate to employ anybody, disabled or otherwise, if they were capable of doing the job required.”**

Employer, service sector

A number of people also seemed to think that disabled people would be most suited to low-paid, unskilled, menial work often without any contact with the general public. A number of people assumed that disabled people wouldn't be able to do 'intellectual' or 'professional' jobs. This suggests that many people still don't expect disabled people to be represented in white collar, professional occupations.

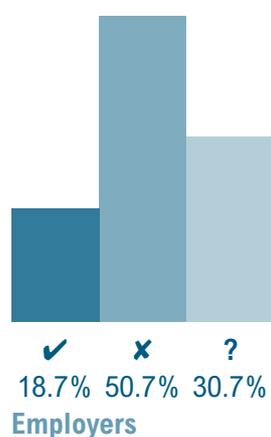
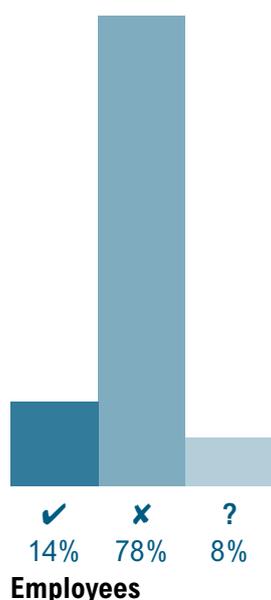
**“In the past I have found that often disabled employees have good absence and performance records, but it does depend on the role and the disability (e.g. I have had great success with the deaf on the night shift where there is little customer contact).”**

Employer, retail sector

**“Most of the jobs are highly intellectual. There is a mail room and I have known disabled people to work in mail rooms, but there doesn't appear to be any in ours.”**

Employee

**“I was told that I couldn't be considered for a senior management position because I am diabetic and might fall asleep at the wheel of the very**



- ✓ = Agree
- ✗ = Disagree
- ? = Don't know

**expensive company car.”**

Disabled respondent

A number of employers had concerns about employing people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. This suggests that there is still a significant degree of ignorance about how learning disability and mental health affect people’s ability to work. In reality many people with these types of impairment hold down full-time jobs and are valuable members of the workforce suggesting that there is a real need to educate employers about learning disability and mental health and remove the stigma that many people still associate with these types of impairment.

**“I honestly feel that the majority of employers would be reluctant to employ mentally handicapped people because of the extra time and effort involved in training and monitoring them. Physically disabled people would be welcomed into our business, if it were possible for them to perform the job required.”**

Employer, service industry

Overall the comments highlight the lack of awareness amongst employers and employees of the numerous alternative ways of performing everyday tasks. Many people still think that if someone can’t do something in the usual way they must not be able to do it at all. The issue of immediately seeing the problems of employing a disabled person as opposed to the many solutions is clearly still a major barrier to employing disabled people.

### ***Top tips for employers***

- Don’t assume that just because someone is disabled they can’t do the job. Everyone has their own ways of doing things and doing something differently doesn’t mean doing it less well.
- Disabled people are not only capable of performing unskilled, menial work. Like everyone else disabled people want work that matches their skills, abilities and interests.
- Disabled people want career development, promotion and responsibility just like everyone else.
- There is still a lot of stigma attached to people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. Everyone has individual skills and abilities and people with these types of impairments have a lot to offer if employers look at the individual beyond the stereotypes.

## *Good practice case study – attitude*

### **Amelia's experience**

“After I graduated I was offered very few interviews and when I was, the jobs didn't fully utilise my skills and knowledge. I got involved in Scope's Fast-Track scheme for disabled graduates and got a six-month placement with B&Q's Social Responsibility team identifying chemicals used in their products and recommending how their environmental impact can be reduced.

“Many companies are not confident about handling disability and lack of experience has a lot to do with it. Fast-Track addresses both of these issues and it gives me the benefit of great work experience with some of the UK's foremost employers. I hope that B&Q's involvement will encourage more companies to feel positive about employing disabled people.”

### **B&Q said about employing Amelia:**

“As well as giving people valuable work experience and real confidence the Scope scheme helps further B&Q's awareness of disability and employment issues, especially training and developing staff with a variety of disabilities and the recruitment and selection of disabled people.

“B&Q prides itself on judging people on their abilities not their disabilities. If you take Amelia's case nearly half a million people in this country have epilepsy and 10% of the population are dyslexic, so more businesses need to realise that disabilities don't exclude someone from being a valuable employee.”

# Recommendations

## Government

- Publicise employers' duties and responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Raise awareness of the Access to Work scheme through an advertising and information campaign specifically targeted at employers.
- Promote the business case for diversity to employers in partnership with the CBI, Federation of Small Businesses, Employers' Forum on Disability, local chambers of commerce, disability organisations and other relevant partners.
- Review employment practices and procedures across all Government departments to attract disabled employees and ensure disabled people have equal opportunities in recruitment and equal access to training and development and promotion prospects at all levels of government.
- Ensure disabled people have equal opportunities to access and benefit from education, vocational training and work experience opportunities.

## Disability Rights Commission

- Support disabled people to take employment discrimination cases to court and help establish case law.

## MPs and Assembly Members

- Raise the issues of equality and access to employment for disabled people in national, regional and local debates.
- Make sure your constituency offices are accessible, and that your recruitment procedures encourage disabled applicants.
- Encourage local employers' fora to discuss strategies for improving their employment practices and promote equality of opportunity for disabled people in your constituency.

## Employers

- Don't make assumptions about the abilities of disabled employees.
- Provide disability equality training for managers and staff.
- Ensure you have, and enforce, a policy of non-discrimination for disabled applicants and employees.
- Get an access audit of your premises done and make any alterations you can make now. Ensure that any new premises you buy, use or rent are accessible to disabled people and that all new build and refurbishment projects should be designed so they include everyone.
- Make sure everyone responsible for recruitment knows about the Access to Work scheme and how to access it.
- Make sure all your vacancies are advertised where disabled applicants will see them.
- Consider operating a guaranteed interview scheme where any disabled person meeting the essential criteria for a post is short-listed.
- Tell your local MP or council if there are barriers such as local transport or planning regulations that are creating barriers to you employing disabled people.
- If you are unsure about any aspect of reaching, employing or retaining disabled employees contact the relevant organisation for advice (see Useful Contacts).
- Establish a forum for business in your local area to discuss how to remove barriers and promote good practice around employing disabled people.

## Employees

- Don't make assumptions about disabled people.
- Ask your employer what they are doing to attract disabled employees.
- Challenge colleagues, customers and clients who express views or opinions offensive or hurtful to disabled people.
- Take collective responsibility for making and keeping the workplace accessible. Don't create barriers with furniture, storage etc.
- Think about disabled colleagues' access needs when arranging social events.

## Disabled people

- Use the Ready, Willing and Disabled toolkit.
- Challenge discrimination where you encounter it and report bad practice and unfair treatment to the Disability Rights Commission.
- Talk to your employer, colleagues and trade union about any attitudinal or access barriers you encounter at work.

## Regional Development Agencies and Chambers of Commerce

- Publicise employers' duties and responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Raise awareness of the Access to Work scheme to local employers.
- Promote the business case for diversity to employers.
- Establish a forum for business in your local area to discuss how to remove barriers and promote good practice around employing disabled people.

## Trades unions

- Make sure your staff and volunteers are up to date on the rights of disabled employees and support them if they experience discrimination.
- Make sure your trade union campaigns against discrimination on the grounds of disability as seriously as it does around other areas of discrimination.

# Top tips for employers on employing disabled people

The top tips below can be found in the relevant sections throughout this report. We have summarised them below for your convenience.

## Attracting disabled applicants

- Continual rejection damages anybody's confidence. Statements on job adverts like 'we particularly welcome disabled applicants' mean disabled people know that your company is serious about employing disabled people.
- Think about where you advertise your vacancies. Newspaper adverts aren't accessible to all disabled people so placing your advert in a number of places e.g. in the newspaper, online and in specialist disability publications (such as Disability Now) helps to ensure as many people as possible see it. If you have to advertise only in newspapers make sure the vital information e.g. the job title, salary and company's contact details are in larger print.
- Employers have a statutory duty to monitor the number of job applications they receive from disabled applicants. If you don't know who's applying you won't know where you have a problem. If you don't receive many applications consider how you could reach disabled people more effectively (see above tips)

## Qualifications

- Think about the skills and abilities needed for the jobs you advertise. Do they require formal qualifications or just particular competencies that candidates could demonstrate in other ways?
- Could a test or exercise at the interview be used to prove academic competence rather than relying on qualifications?
- Can you provide training on the job to enable people to acquire additional skills and experience?

## Application forms

- Make sure your application form is clear and straightforward and conforms to the RNIB's clear print guidelines (see Useful Contacts for details).
- Make sure your application forms and information about the post are available in alternative formats including Braille, tape and large print and in an electronic format.
- Make sure your application form asks about disability. Disabled people shouldn't have to hide their impairment or condition so give people somewhere to tell you about any additional needs they may have straightaway.
- Monitor the applications (and any comments) you receive so you can identify any problems with the process and improve it where necessary.

## Interviews

- Consider whether your interview process might put certain disabled candidates at a disadvantage. If it does you need to alter your interview technique so as to be fair to all candidates.
- When inviting candidates to interview ask them if they have any particular access requirements relating to the interview e.g. wheelchair access, a British Sign Language interpreter.
- Difference can be daunting. But doing a job differently doesn't mean doing it less well. If you are unsure whether a disabled applicant will be able to perform certain tasks ask them to tell you about aspects of the job they might find difficult and if there are any adjustments or equipment that would make it easier. Most disabled people have tried and tested techniques and in most cases a few simple adjustments will enable that person to do the job equally well.
- Disabled people live with and manage their impairments daily. Asking people how they get out of bed or do other things unrelated to work is intrusive and unnecessary.

## Access

- Creating an accessible environment is not as difficult as it seems. It just takes a bit of common sense. If you aren't sure if something will be accessible to someone, ask them. Disabled people encounter unnecessary access barriers every day and are best placed to tell you how to remove them.
- Access does not just mean ramps and lifts, though level access is an important part of creating an accessible environment. An access barrier can be anything that prevents a disabled person participating as an equal or being unnecessarily reliant on someone else for help.
- If you are unsure about how to improve access to your premises you can get your premises professionally audited by someone trained in how to create a fully accessible environment (see Useful Contacts for details).

## Cost

- Don't make assumptions about what adjustments or equipment a disabled employee might need. Everyone is different so make sure you talk to each person individually about what they might need.
- Not all adjustments cost a lot. The majority can be made quickly and cheaply and many benefit non-disabled staff, too.
- Make sure you know about Access to Work and how you access it.

## Health and safety

- Except in very specific circumstances, health and safety regulations do not make it difficult to employ disabled people. Everyone's health and safety needs are different and every staff member should have an individual assessment of their workspace and duties to ensure they are working safely. If you are concerned about health and safety issues with regard to a disabled employee make sure you discuss it with them and consider the whole range of potential adjustments.
- Emergency and evacuation procedures should apply to all staff including disabled employees. You can contact your local fire brigade or the Disability Rights Commission for advice on this.

## Transport

- If public transport is inaccessible to some of your employees consider writing to the Council or your local MP to complain.
- Be flexible about start and finish times for employees who have difficulty using public transport. It's much easier for wheelchair users to use public transport outside the rush hour.
- Find out if your disabled employees are eligible for assistance with getting to and from work from Access to Work.
- Provide parking spaces for disabled employees. If you do not have a disabled parking bay for your office you can apply to the Council to have one installed.

## Fear of the unknown

- Disabled people are people first and foremost. People's impairments are part of them but by no means the only thing about them. Every person is different and someone's impairment is as significant or insignificant as you want to make it.
- Employing disabled staff members is the easiest and quickest way to explode myths and stereotypes about disability and disabled people.

## Staff attitudes

- If you feel staff might find working with a disabled person difficult you should provide compulsory disability equality training for all staff.
- Make it clear to staff, through posters, memos and other means, that your company does not tolerate discriminatory behaviour.
- Most access barriers are created through poor design and lack of awareness. Encourage staff to take collective responsibility for ensuring that the workplace is accessible to all staff. The work environment should be everyone's problem.

## Public face

- Encourage staff members to challenge customers or clients who express views or opinions that are offensive or hurtful to disabled people.
- If you only employ disabled people in 'behind the scenes' roles ask yourself why this is.
- Do you use images of disabled people in your advertising or recruitment material? If not, why not?

## Sickness

- Illness and disability are not necessarily related. Statistically, disabled people are less likely to take time off sick than non-disabled employees are.
- For many disabled people there are extra costs and commitments (such as medical check-ups or getting equipment mended) associated with their impairment or condition that cannot be ignored. Employers need to recognise this and be flexible. Most people, disabled and non-disabled, benefit from flexible working practices.

## Work rate

- Don't assume a disabled employee will be less efficient or productive than a non-disabled person.
- Some disabled people are entitled to support from a personal assistant to assist them in doing their job. If a disabled employee thinks they would benefit from a support assistant you should approach Access to Work.

## Help and support

- Do not assume that all disabled people need you to help them. If a person needs help they will ask for it.
- Consider whether your work environment makes disabled employees more dependent on their colleagues than they need to be. For example, store things on low shelves so a wheelchair user can reach them unaided.
- If a disabled employee thinks they would benefit from a personal assistant to assist them in doing their job you and the employee should approach Access to Work to find out what they can provide.

## Job suitability

- Disabled people are not only capable of performing unskilled, menial work. Like everyone else disabled people want work that matches their skills, abilities and interests.
- Disabled people want career development, promotion and responsibility just like everyone else.
- There is still a lot of stigma attached to people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. Everyone has individual skills and abilities and people with these types of impairments have a lot to offer if employers look at the individual beyond the stereotypes.

# The business case for diversity

**Achieving diversity within the workforce is not just something that employers should do because 'it's the right thing to do'. Diversity is also good for business.**

Many of the country's leading employers recognise the business advantages of recruiting a more diverse workforce and that disabled employees are a vital part of that diversity. Besides their ability to do the job a diverse workforce brings additional benefits including:

**Competitive advantage** – It helps a company to have employees who come from all parts of society and who are, look, act, and think like the company's potential customers. A diverse workforce can help meet changing consumer demands and emerging niche markets.

**Diverse perspectives** – Disabled people have considerable life experience, solving challenging problems on a regular basis. Creative problem-solving skills can help companies find new solutions and lead to more satisfied customers.

**Representative workforce** – If a company's workforce mirrors the diversity of Britain's population, companies will be more representative of their customers and potential customers. A diverse workforce enables companies to connect with all sectors of the community increasing their customer base and creating a positive image of the company.

**Larger pool of potential employees** – Disabled people make up 20% of the working age population in Britain. Ignoring potential disabled employees means companies are missing out on a large pool of talent, skills and expertise.

**Universal access** – Employing disabled people promotes universal access which, in turn, benefits everyone. For example, automatic doors also are not only accessible to disabled people but also improve access for other employees and customers with heavy loads or children in tow. Larger print, larger computer monitors and improved lighting reduce eyestrain. Ergonomic chairs and workstations cut down on health complaints, and flexible work arrangements increase the job satisfaction of all employees.

# The Disability Discrimination Act and employment

## What is the Disability Discrimination Act?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) passed onto the statute books in 1995. It was the first significant piece of legislation to prohibit discrimination against disabled people and was an important step forward in the campaign for full civil rights for all disabled people.

## Why is the DDA important?

The DDA is important because many disabled people still face discrimination in our society. Part II of the Act is specifically about equal access to employment. Many disabled people are still not given equal access to employment opportunities, a right most of us take for granted. Poor access, negative attitudes and a lack of awareness can make things like filling out an application form, going for an interview or going for a promotion more difficult and sometimes impossible for a disabled person.

## Who does the DDA Part II apply to?

From October 2004 the employment provisions of the Act will apply to all employers apart from those who work wholly outside Great Britain and members of the Armed Forces.

The Act will also cover the following categories (people who are not normally considered employees):

- contract workers
- police officers
- partners in firms
- barristers and advocates
- people undertaking practical work experiences for the purposes of vocational training

At present the Act has exemptions for: prison officers, fire fighters, employees who work on board ships, aircraft or hovercraft, employees who work mainly outside the UK and organisations who employ fewer than 15 full- or part-time workers. These exemptions will be removed from 2004.

## How does the DDA affect me?

The Act puts legal duties on all employers except those exempted above. If employers fail to meet these duties they will be breaking the law and could be prosecuted.

## What does the DDA Part II say?

The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person in the field of employment. The Act states that organisations need to ensure that they are in full compliance with legislation in:

- Recruitment including job advertisements
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Opportunities for promotions, transfer, training or receipt of other employment benefits; or refusal of them
- Termination of employment
- Pensions

The Act says that discrimination can happen in several ways:

- The employer treats a disabled person less favourably (for a reason related to their disability) than a non-disabled person.
- An employer does not make 'reasonable adjustments' in order to accommodate a disabled person.

But also:

- Harassment related to disability
- Victimisation (after 2004)

### Example #1 – Discrimination by less favourable treatment

A learning disabled woman applies for a job. She can do the job and has lots of experience but the employer thinks that she won't fit in with other staff. The employer gives the job to someone else who has less experience but does not have a learning disability.

If the employer cannot justify his treatment of the disabled person he has unlawfully discriminated against her.

### Example #2 – Discrimination by not making 'reasonable' adjustments

An employee who is a wheelchair user applies for a promotion at work, and although the best candidate, is not appointed as the new work area is in an inaccessible area of the building. The area could have been moved or arrangements made for the disabled employee to work in an accessible part of the building.

## What isn't discrimination?

An employer decides to close down a factory and makes all employees redundant including a disabled person who works there. This is not discrimination, as the disabled employee is not being dismissed for a reason related to their disability.

## What is reasonable?

The DDA Part II states that any adjustments made to ensure that disabled people can access employment must be 'reasonable'. The definition of 'reasonable' will be decided as cases are taken to court, however practicality, the employer's size, resources and activities and the impact the adjustment would have on their activities will also be taken into account when judging what's reasonable.

As the number of cases going through the courts increases more case law will be established which should give us a greater insight into the meaning of 'reasonable' in this context. Also, the definition of what is reasonable is likely to change as expectations around standards increase.

## How can I find out more?

A range of leaflets is available from the Disability Rights Commission. All can be downloaded free of charge from the DRC website. To order hard copies of any of the leaflets contact the DRC helpline:

Telephone: **08457 622 633**  
Textphone: **08457 622 644**  
Fax: **08457 622 611**  
Email: **enquiry@drc-gb.org**  
Website: **www.drc-gb.org**

The DRC helpline can also answer any questions you may have relating to any aspect of the DDA.

# Government programmes

**There are a number of government schemes that are designed to support disabled people into and at work. These include:**

## **Access to Work**

Access to Work provides practical support to disabled people and their employers. As well as giving advice and information to disabled people and employers, Access to Work may pay a grant, through Jobcentre Plus, towards any extra employment costs which result from disability after the employer has made any reasonable adjustments as required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

Access to Work may pay for between 80% and 100% of costs over £300 for unemployed, employed and self-employed people, and people changing jobs. They can help with things like communicator support at interview, the costs of fares to work, support workers, equipment or adaptation to premises.

## **Employment assessment**

This can guide you through some of the issues around looking for work. It will help you to identify your strengths and abilities and to make a plan of action towards finding employment you want. This does not affect your benefits and you can claim travel expenses.

## **REMPLOY**

REMPLOY has two main functions. For many years REMPLOY has run factories which provide employment for disabled people. They now also place disabled people in supported employment in mainstream companies.

## **WORKSTEP**

WORKSTEP is specifically for people whose needs can not be met by other programmes. They provide support into jobs for people who encounter more complex barriers to finding and keeping work. WORKSTEP also offers practical advice to employers.

## **New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)**

NDDP supports disabled people on disability benefits to move into and keep paid employment. This is done through a network of specialist job brokers across England, Wales and Scotland.

## **Job Introduction Scheme (JIS)**

The JIS may be able to help if you are about to start a job and you or your employer have genuine concerns about your ability to manage this particular job because for your disability. JIS can help by paying a weekly grant in your first few weeks of employment to help toward your wages or other employment expenses, such as additional training.

## **Work preparation**

This is a programme designed around individual needs to help disabled people return to work after a long period of sickness or unemployment. It can also help people who are at risk of losing their job by helping them to resolve difficulties that are affecting their work.

Work preparation aims to do this by helping you to identify the type of work most suitable for you, providing work experience, learning new skills and building confidence. You will then receive a final report, which you discuss with your DEA to agree an action plan for the future.

**For more information about any of these programmes contact your Disability Employment Advisor through your local job centre or visit [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)**

# Methodology

The decision to launch a campaign around attitudes to employing disabled people coincided with a major Scope advertising campaign sponsored by London Underground. The advert below appeared on billboards on the London Underground and the Newcastle Metro aiming to raise awareness of disabled people as employees and asking disabled people, employers and employees to fill in our survey about employment.

Like a number of Scope's other recent campaigns Ready, Willing and Disabled was run and managed through the Internet. The majority of respondents accessed the survey through a specially designed website and filled in their responses online.

Almost a thousand people filled in the survey (250 employers, 440 employees and 279 disabled people). We had responses from people aged between 16 and 65 from all over the UK as well as a few people from the USA and Europe. People worked in every type of business from shipbuilding to IT and we had responses from large multinational companies that employ thousands of people, small businesses with only a few staff members and many in between.



# Useful contacts

## **Scope**

Tel: 020 7619 7245  
Textphone: 18001 020 7619 7245  
Helpline: 0808 800 3333  
Email: [campaigns@scope.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@scope.org.uk)  
Website: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

## **Scope's Employment Support Services**

Tel: 01480 309615  
Fax: 01480 309636  
Email: [employment.support@scope.org.uk](mailto:employment.support@scope.org.uk)

## **Disability Now newspaper**

Tel: 020 7619 7323  
Fax: 020 7619 7331  
Minicom: 020 7619 7332  
Email: [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk)  
Website: [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)

## **Fast-Track**

Fast-Track is an employment scheme run by Scope for disabled people of graduate calibre. It provides personal development skills training and two six-month secondments with national employers.  
Tel: 020 7619 7229  
Fax: 020 7619 7399  
Minicom: 020 7619 7187  
Email: [fast-track@scope.org.uk](mailto:fast-track@scope.org.uk)  
Website: <http://fast-track.scope.org.uk/>

## **Access Association**

Tel/Text: 01922 652010  
Fax: 01922 614210  
Email: [foxs@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:foxs@walsall.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.accessassociation.co.uk](http://www.accessassociation.co.uk)

## **Centre for Accessible Environments**

Minicom/Tel: 020 7357 8182  
Fax: 020 7357 8183  
Email: [info@cae.org.uk](mailto:info@cae.org.uk)  
Website: [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

## **Department for Work and Pensions**

Tel: 020 7712 2171  
(9.00am-5.00pm Monday-Friday)  
Fax: 020 7712 2386  
Website: [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

## **Disability Rights Commission**

Tel: 08457 622 633  
Fax: 08457 778 878  
Textphone: 08457 622 644  
Email: [enquiry@drc-gb.org](mailto:enquiry@drc-gb.org)  
Website: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

## **Employers' Forum on Disability**

Tel: 020 7403 3020  
Fax: 020 7403 0404  
Minicom: 020 7403 0040  
Email: [website.enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk](mailto:website.enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk)  
Website: [www.employers-forum.co.uk](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk)

## **Jobcentre Plus**

Contact your local job centre, or  
Website: [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

## **RNIB – clear print guidelines**

Tel: 0845 702 3153  
Fax: 01733 37 15 55  
Textphone: 18001 0845 702 3153  
Email: [cservices@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cservices@rnib.org.uk)  
Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## **RNID**

Tel: 0808 808 0123 (freephone)  
Textphone: 0808 808 9000 (freephone)  
Fax: 020 7296 8199  
Email: [informationline@rnid.org.uk](mailto:informationline@rnid.org.uk)  
Website: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

**Online recruitment websites aimed at disabled people looking for work. Employers can advertise vacancies on them.**

<http://fast-forward.scope.org.uk/>  
[www.jobability.com](http://www.jobability.com)  
[www.readywillingable.net](http://www.readywillingable.net)  
[www.yourable.com](http://www.yourable.com)