

*Dispelling the
myths about
employing people
with disabilities*

"I feel organisations should be made aware of funding and adaptations available to enable them to employ and retain more people that are disabled"



A report for employers produced by Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum

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Sketch by David Collins made for the Employ Disability project

Background

Under the category of advice and services relating to access and retaining employment, a Mental Health and Social Inclusion Capital Grant application was made to Adult Services. £1000 was then granted to the Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum to run a seminar and produce this information guide.

This was for Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum to run a seminar in 2009 around 'Dispelling the Myths of Employing People with Disabilities'. A main aim of this seminar was to help to remove the stigma attached to mental health problems by employers. This would link to the Strategic Disability Partnership's Employment Action Groups' strategy for increasing employment chances for disabled people, including people with mental health problems living in the Bradford District.

BAOHSF has over 700 employers as members and represents public, private, voluntary, and trade union organisations.

The Employment Action Group already had many competent members who could speak at the seminar. There was discussion at the Employment Action Group of holding a workshop at the seminar discussing the barriers to work with employers and running a snap shot survey. It was also intended to produce a myth busting information guide post meeting from the information gained. Advice on who spoke at the seminar was given by the Employment Action Group.

Research shows that the cost of adjustments for disabled staff can be far less than those of recruiting and training new staff. The employee knows about the company's products and methods of working. They may also know customers and business colleague's well, whom will react positively when they know that reasonable adjustment have been made.

The Seminar

The Seminar aimed to dispel some of the myths around the employment of people with disabilities including mental health problems. Also a reduction in the stigma attached to workers with mental ill health and other disabilities was expected, whilst also making the business case for the employment of or retention of people with mental health problems and other disabilities, eg loyalty, retention of workforce which reduces recruitment costs and the wider determinants of ill health which have a financial impact on society (corporate social responsibility) – which in itself leads to good publicity and good will.



Dispelling the Myths around the employment of disabled people

You are welcome to join in a free seminar run by Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum to look at issues around employing people with disabilities, including people with mild mental health problems.

To be held in Bradford at
Manningham Mills Community Centre 10am-12
Tuesday 14th July 2009



The Seminar took place on Tuesday 14th of July 2009. One lesson learned on retrospect was that there are two main models of disability and in ignorance the very title of the seminar was a little offensive to people with disabilities.

Models of Disability - Medical model and the Social model

Models of disability provide a framework for understanding the way in which people with impairments experience disability. They also provide a reference for society as laws, regulations and structures are developed that impact on the lives of people with disabilities. There are two main models that have influenced modern thinking about disability: the medical model and the social model.

In the medical model, disabled people are seen as the problem. They need to change and adapt to circumstances (if they can), and there is no suggestion that society needs to change. This model reflects the World Health Organisation definition of disability.

The social model has been developed by disabled people. In their view disability is caused by the barriers that exist within society and the way society is organised, which discriminates against people with impairments and excludes them from involvement and participation.

Terms like disabled person are not good it is better to say person with disability. Also it is not good to refer to disabled toilet but it is good to refer to an accessible toilet.

Speakers

We ended up with four people speaking live at the seminar and three people spoke from brilliant short films that had been prepared earlier as part of an Employ Disability project – details of this can be found at www.employdisability.co.uk/Toolkit.aspx

The presentations from the speakers at the Dispelling the Myths seminar can be downloaded on our website see www.baohsf.org.uk Some of what the speakers covered is written over the next few pages. Followed by an evaluation of what employers thought about the barriers and best suited jobs.

Bradford Council- Removing the barriers to work for disabled employees

Susan Gee MA. BSc (Hons) RGN

Equality and Diversity

Bradford Council has A Good Guide to Employing Disabled People “Promoting Fairness and Inclusion in the Workplace”

Reasonable adjustments are steps taken to ensure a disabled person is not disadvantaged compared to a non disabled person.

Occupational Health Approach

Look at functional capacity (What the person can do)

Look at what adjustments may be considered for them to continue in their post

What adjustments are required to allow them to do their job

Can management make any of the suggested adjustments-evidence based approach

Redeployment

What we can and have done

Flexible working patterns

Redeployment

Home working

Rehabilitation back into work place

Practical adjustments alongside Access to Work and /or Specialists/other agencies

Specialist equipment

Relocation (temporary or permanent)

Reduction in working hours

Examples of Conditions referred to EHWBU needing adjustments

Multiple sclerosis

Cancer

Asthma/ lung problems

Heart conditions

Arthritis

Strokes

Back problem/skeletal

List is exhaustive

Neurological problems

Voice activate software on computer

Ramps for easy access to the office

Key for lift although working on ground floor preferable

Designated private area for self catheterisation
Car park space near office
Time of for hospital appointment or treatment with specialist

Pulmonary illnesses

Reduction in hours
Flexible working pattern
Higher than average sickness absence
Quiet area if nebulizer/ treatment needed
Work on lower floors or access to lift

Skeletal problems

Specialist chair and/or desk
Speech recognition software
Workstation equipment note holder or wrist/foot rest. Individual keyboards/mice
Laptop/ projector (which frees employee from sitting all day)
Reallocation of work
Telephone headset
Change start time to later in day due to pain
Taxis to and from work
Trolley for transporting Equipment

Mental Health Problems

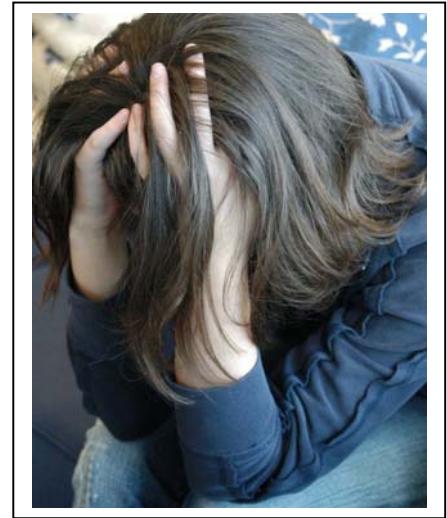
Change in working hours (start later, finish later)
Redeployment into a less stressful role
Education of management in dispelling stereotypical idea of mental illness and its effect on employment
Time off for Hospital appointments
Refer for Cognitive Behavior Therapy/Psychotherapy/Psychiatric Review
Provision of supervision and/or support

Bradford Council has a *'Good Practice Guide to Employing Disabled Staff' – promoting Fairness and Inclusion in the workplace*. Contact the Employee Health and Well Being team on 01274 434246 for a copy.

Dispelling the Myths - Mental Distress

By Pamela Coulson from Mind in Bradford

“The stigma and discrimination they face because of their diagnosis has a bigger impact on their lives than the underlying symptoms of mental illness..... They can manage their symptoms and get on with their lives, but fear, prejudice and the resulting discrimination take away the rights that most of us take it for granted.” Rosie Winterton, Minister of State for Health Services



The Stigma of having a mental health problem

- Crazy • Violent • Nutter • Psycho
- Mad.....Bad
- Schizo
- “Pull yourself together” • “Get a grip”
- Manipulative • Attention seeker • Bonkers
- Split personality • Jekyll and Hyde

“Not Just Sticks and Stones”

- 47% had been abused or harassed in public
- 14% had been physically abused
- 25% felt they were at risk of attack at home
- 26% were forced to move home because of harassment

When asked who, or what, do you blame for this discrimination?

- 66% blamed a lack of education and awareness by the public
- 60% blamed the media
- 49% blamed personal prejudice
- 48% blamed fears
- 22% thought it was the politicians fault.

- **One in four** people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives
- At any given time **one in six** of us will be experiencing a mental health problem
- Estimates vary, but research suggests that **20%** of children have a mental health problem
- Depression affects **one in five** older people living in the community and **two in five** living in care homes
- The UK has one of the highest rates of self-harm in Europe at 400 per 100,000
- 450 million people across the world have a mental health problem
- Around 8-12% of the population experience depression in any given year

Reality at Work

- 58% had to leave a job because of lack of mental health support
- 31% had been sacked or forced out of a job after disclosing a mental health problem
- 26% had been demoted after disclosing a mental health problem
- 1 in 4 had job offers withdrawn after disclosing a mental health problem which is illegal under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Speaking on lack of support in the workplace, one service user told Mind:

“I went to HR and explained several times I was ill, being bullied and felt suicidal. They didn’t know what to do, and they did nothing. I had several meetings to talk about what was happening, and nothing came of it. They were totally ineffective. I was telling them I was suicidal. I could have ended up dead, and they would have borne some responsibility for that.”

“It’s so simple to do it properly. It’s not rocket science, talking to people and finding out what can be done to help. I hated that job, the environment, how I had been treated and I left.”

What Can Employers Do?

- Ensure that Recruitment policies welcome people with Mental Health problems
 - Increase Managers’ and Supervisors’ knowledge, understanding and awareness of Mental Health Issues
 - Have a Mental Health First Aider
 - Have a strong anti-bullying policy
 - Remember that people with mental health problems do want to work
 - People CAN and DO recover from Mental Distress Information Contacts
-
- Guide-Line Telephone Line for Information and advice **01274 594594** or
E-mail Alex@mindinbradford.org.uk
 - www.Mind.org.uk
 - *Mindinfo* Line: **0845 7660163**
 - www.Rethink.org
 - Managing for Mental Health: The mind Employer’s Resource Pack. Available from Mind.

Evaluation of the Dispelling the Myths around the employment of people with disabilities

35 Bradford District Employers took part in the research in July 2009

These 35 employers influence the health and safety of 51,256 workers - this is approximately 20% of the districts workforce.

The key challenges and barriers around the employment of disabled workers were:

Attitudes of Businesses

Commercial barriers - business needs support to overcome the adjustments required

The misconception of non-disabled recruiting employers

Having all the skills needed for the post.

The protected time off work.

knowledge, understanding, individual perceptions

Cost.

Stereotypical thinking amongst colleagues etc i.e. That all black people are mentally disturbed and aggressive

Prejudice and ignorance.

Reducing fears of employers

Training Managers to identify and deal with disability

Lack of education.

Finance

Not 'Thinking outside the box'

Attitudes and prejudice

Cost of equipment.

Stigma, especially with mental health problems

Cover all aspects of getting someone into a job and not turn anyone away.

Convincing employers

The capability of SMEs to deal with these situations

Preconceived ideas amongst employers and an unwillingness to put in the effort.

The impact on other workers of employing someone who may need additional time off.

Cost for the employer and making employees aware of the issues

Introduce more innovative means of working incentives. Policies and procedures of larger and public sector employer need to aid the secondment

Stigma and perception

Public perceptions and lack of understanding
lack of knowledge about conditions and the fear of the implications involved including the price of reasonable adjustments

lack of understanding in the workplace and general society.

Education in the workplace

Preconceived ideas held by others. Employers expects an expense of the employment of disabled workers

Building understanding and awareness

Lack of up to date training of those doing the short listing and recruiting.

Employers need to give people the opportunity to prove they can do the job and overcome barriers.

It appears that support to implement the policies of the managers/team leaders is lacking in NHS and LA with practical issues.

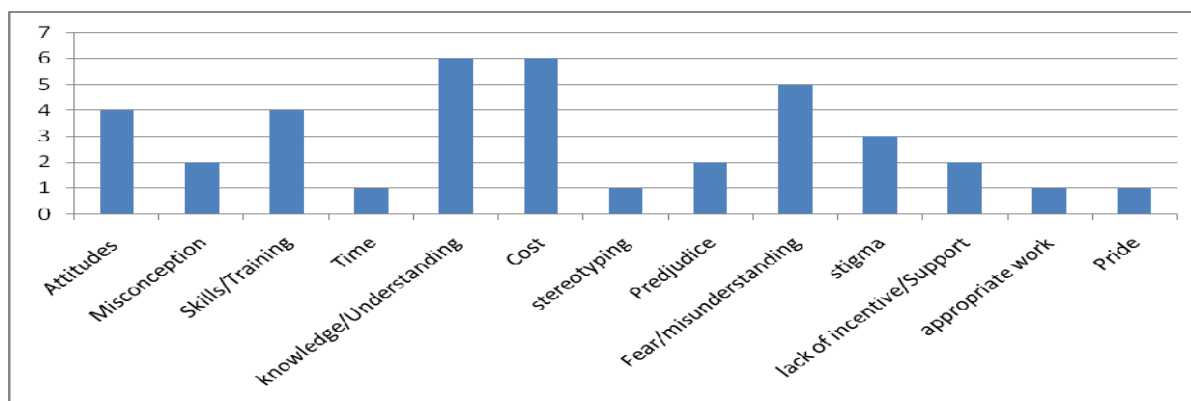
Concepts of what managers have to do to facilitate employment of disabled persons.

Practical issues e.g. risk implications, health and safety risk assessments, reasonable adjustments and obligations of employers to disabled persons.

Identifying appropriate work that suits the applicant

Peoples attitudes towards disabled workers

Stigma. Pride.



Graph showing key challenges to the employment of people with disabilities as seen by employers

The best suited jobs for people with disabilities was found to be:

All jobs

It depends on what disabilities people have.

I feel organisations should be made aware of funding and adaptations available to enable them to employ more people that are disabled.

Potentially any role with reasonable adjustments made.

Assemblers

Office based and some manual roles

All jobs would be able to accommodate disabled persons, they may need adjustments.

Has to be on an individual bases

All jobs potentially. Disabled people are very varied.

Depends on the disability

It would depend on the disability

Call centre, stock control, HR and Finance - all office based

It would depend on the disabilities as we undertake a range of work

All areas can be done with the right kind of support

Depends on the individual but it should be all jobs.

Depends on applicants skills and experience irrespective of disability.

Depending on disability, all jobs can be suitable with reasonable adjustments made.

All jobs at college with relevant adjustment on a case by case basis.

Our organisation specializes in working with people with Autism and Asperger syndrome; the best suited jobs for this group are generally well structured ones.

I think the best suited jobs come down to what the individual is looking for and how that job can be adapted to accommodate regardless of a persons aspirations.

Any, it is the person who is the best for the job

Self employment is an alternative for people with disabilities

All jobs are possible, recruiters need to look outside of the box, stop labeling disabled as one group.

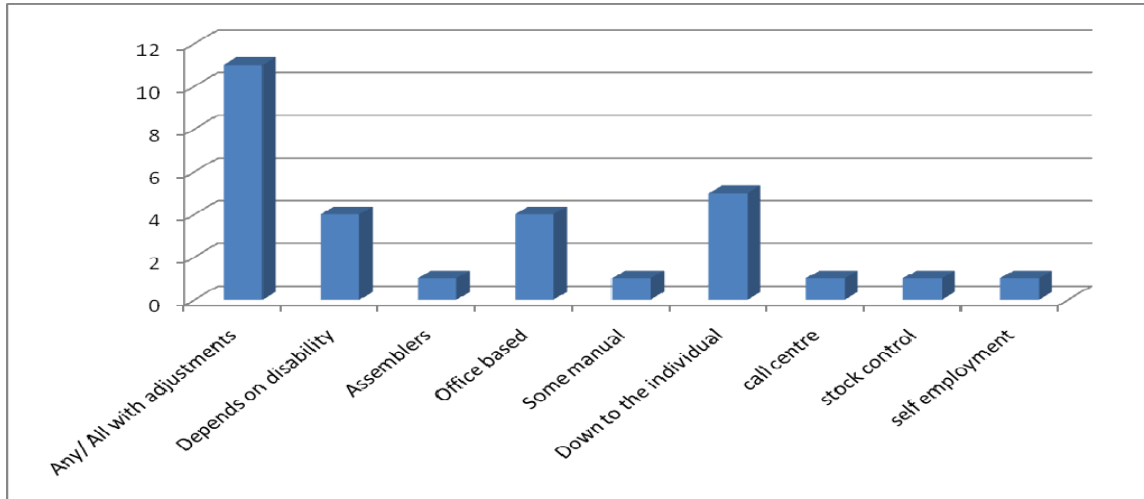
All types of work.

Find out what are the capabilities of the disabled person and if they are suitable for the posts available after reasonable adjustments.

Office based work

Telephone advisors, drop-in workers, admin

Graph showing summary of jobs recommended for disabled people by employers



It is very interesting that the most popular best suited jobs as seen by employers was all jobs/any jobs (with some reasonable adjustments). Also interesting but not too surprising is that knowledge/understanding of disabilities and the costs involved are seen as the main key challenges seen by employers.

There are resources available to help with reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Access to Work - practical help at work



Access to Work can help employees if their health or disability affects the way they do their job. It gives the employee and employer advice and support with extra costs which may arise because of the employees needs.

About Access to Work

Access to Work might pay towards the equipment needed at work, adapting premises to meet needs, or for a support worker. It can also pay towards the cost of getting to work if the employee cannot use public transport.

If a communicator is needed at job interviews, Access to Work may be available, too.

Who can get Access to Work

Employees may be able to get Access to Work if they are: in a paid job; unemployed and about to start a job; unemployed and about to start a Work Trial and their disability or health condition stops them from being able to do parts of the job. Disability or health conditions may not have a big effect on what they do each day, but may have a long-term effect on how well they can do their job.

How to contact Access to Work

If your employee feels that the type of work they do is affected by a disability or health condition that is likely to last for 12 months or more, then they can contact a regional Access to Work contact centre to check whether you can get help. Alternatively, they can ask the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at the local Jobcentre about Access to Work.

The contact number for Access to Work for the Bradford District is 0141 950 5327

Employer's responsibilities

Once an adviser has decided on the package of support they feel is appropriate, they will seek formal approval of their recommendations from Jobcentre Plus. The employer and the employee will then receive a letter informing them of the approved level of support and the grant available.

It is the responsibility of the employer to arrange the agreed support and buy the necessary equipment. The employer can then claim repayment of the approved costs from Access to Work. The precise level of cost sharing is agreed between the employer and the Access to Work adviser. After between one and three years, Access to Work will review the circumstances and the support the employee is receiving.

Positive about Disabled People – Employers two tick system



This symbol is awarded by Jobcentre Plus to employers in England, Scotland and Wales who have made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled staff.

The five commitments

Employers who use the disability symbol make five commitments regarding recruitment, training, retention, consultation and disability awareness.

These commitments are:

- to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities
- to discuss with disabled employees, at any time but at least once a year, what both parties can do to make sure disabled employees can develop and use their abilities
- to make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment
- to take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
- to review these commitments each year and assess what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans

For more details contact your local Jobcentre Plus or there is also an email facility on their website:

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Employers/Contactus/contactus.aspx

Direct Gov has a great site for information for people with disabilities see-

www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm

The Mindful Employer By Employers, For Employers

Led and supported by employers, the MINDFUL EMPLOYER[®] initiative is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for businesses in recruiting and retaining staff.

Stress, depression and anxiety are estimated to be the cause of more working days lost than any other work-related illness. Sick pay reduces profits. Covering absent workers adds more pressure. Loss of valued and talented people costs more than money.

With the right support, people with mental health issues can and do stay in work. With the right support, you can continue to deliver your business

[Being a MINDFUL EMPLOYER[®]](#)

- Shows others and your own staff that you are a good employer
- Expresses your corporate social responsibility
- Reduces recruitment and training costs
- Helps towards complying with legislation (e.g. DDA & HSE)
- Reduces sickness levels
- Enhances customer service
- Improves productivity
- Makes you more attractive to people with mental health issues and others
- Helps you retain staff who have experienced discrimination in the past
- Makes yours a healthier workplace

Contact Lynne Hall, Social Policy Integration Lead, Yorkshire & Humber Improvement Partnership Tel: 07899 906 551.

Local Support contact numbers

Workstep – Support from Work-Able, Employment Services for people with disability or ill health. Workstep support includes financial assistance to employers **Tel 01274 433553**

Mind in Bradford – Info and Advice **01274 594594 / 01274 730815**

BACC - 01274 481590 / Mobile/text 07791 286178 -Bradford Alliance on Community Care – Leaders on the Bradford Employ Disability Project

Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum – Providers of free occupational health and safety seminars and newsletters for employers in Bradford **01535 691049**

Workers' Health Advice Team - Health and Safety Support and advice for workers **01274 393949** (coming up in the near future Mental Health First Aid Training for employers in partnership with the Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum.)

The Mindful Employer - Support with recruiting and retaining disabled staff - **07899 906 551**

Access to Work For advice and financial support for employers and employees **0141 950 5327**