

# The Disability Standard 2005

## Benchmark Report Summary



The Employers'  
Forum



Disability  
Standard

### **R & D Group**

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## **Employers' Forum on Disability**

The Employers' Forum on Disability is the world's leading employers' organisation focused on making it easier for organisations to become disability confident. We have over 400 members who between them employ nearly a quarter of the UK workforce.

The Employers' Forum is distinctive in that it is a business led, membership organisation working for the mutual benefit of business and people with disabilities. Our work is firmly based in the business, economic and ethical case for positioning disability as a business and societal priority.

# The Disability Standard 2005

## Participating organisations

Alliance & Leicester  
Aviva  
B&Q  
Barclays  
BBC  
BT  
BUPA  
Camelot Group  
Centrica  
Cisco Systems  
Deloitte & Touche  
EDS  
Employers' Forum on Disability  
First Rate Travel Services  
Goldman Sachs International  
HBOS  
HSBC  
InterContinental Hotels Group  
ITV  
Jobsgopublic  
KPMG  
Land Securities Group  
Lehman Brothers  
Lloyds TSB  
McDonald's Restaurants  
Merrill Lynch UK  
Microsoft UK  
Motability Operations  
Nationwide Building Society  
Pfizer  
Reed in Partnership  
Royal Bank of Scotland  
Royal Mail  
Sainsbury's Supermarkets  
Scottish Power  
The Financial Times  
UnumProvident  
West Midlands Co-operative Society  
Total UK

Adult Learning Inspectorate  
Appeals Service  
Arts Council England  
British Council  
British Transport Police  
Camden and Islington Primary Care Trust  
Child Support Agency  
City of London Police  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
Department for Education and Skills  
Department for Transport  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Department of Trade and Industry  
Disability and Carers Service  
Disability Rights Commission  
Driving Standards Agency  
Dstl  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Hertfordshire Constabulary  
Highways Agency  
HM Land Registry  
HM Revenue & Customs  
HM Treasury  
Jobcentre Plus  
Learning and Skills Council  
Leeds Metropolitan University  
Leicestershire Constabulary  
London Borough of Camden  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Lothian and Borders Police  
National Assembly for Wales  
Northamptonshire Police  
Office of Fair Trading  
The Corporate Centre  
The Patent Office  
The Pension Service  
Valuation Office Agency  
Victoria & Albert Museum  
West Midlands Police  
The Rent Service  
UK Passport Service

# What is the Disability Standard?

For the first time ever, pioneering British employers have come together to look at how well they are doing on disability, and to learn from each other about what they could be doing better.

The Disability Standard incorporates the world's first detailed Benchmark Survey measuring organisations' performance on disability. This year, 80 UK employers - with a combined workforce of nearly two million employees - have used the Standard to examine their performance on every aspect of disability as it affects their business.

Employers are aiming to become more 'disability confident'. A truly 'disability confident' organisation would reach the Standard by scoring 100% on the Survey.

The Disability Standard provides the first measure of the extent to which the participants have the commitment, the leadership and the policies and procedures they need if they are to employ and serve disabled people efficiently and mainstream disability confidence into the workplace.

## **The Disability Standard, a comprehensive management tool, comprises:**

- **A self-completed Benchmark Survey**, which requires the organisation to provide evidence to justify its ratings. The Survey is independently validated and addresses all aspects of policies and procedures relating to employment, customer care, IT, the built environment, new product development, e-commerce and e-recruitment, corporate responsibility, procurement, health and safety, occupational health, marketing and communications, consultations with disabled stakeholders and staff, management training, and top team commitment.
- **The Standard Directory**, which links step-by-step to the Survey, lists all the relevant disability legislation, codes of practice, regulations, technical standards and best practice guidance from the Disability Rights Commission, the Forum and other recognised authorities.
- **The Benchmark for Action Conference**, at which overall results of the Survey and the key messages deduced from the results are fed back to the participating organisations. It is also an opportunity for organisations that took part to discuss their results with peers and share what works, what doesn't work, examples of best practice and barriers to improvement.

The Disability Standard encourages those promoting change to:

- **Motivate** the organisation and its people to move into action
- **Act** to develop and value diversity across all areas of business activity
- assess the **Impact** of diversity action and use the learning to re-motivate the organisation and set new goals.

# Summary

The survey results provide a fascinating insight into the extent to which 80 diverse UK employers have become 'disability confident'.

The top performers have demonstrated they now manage disability as an integral part of the way they do business. Others are still putting the foundations of good practice in place. And some could well be at legal and reputational risk.

This year, the participants scored, on average, 57%. Only 18 organisations have scored above 75%, and of these, 11 were public sector organisations and just six were FTSE 100 companies.

## **What does 'disability confident' mean?**

A 'disability confident' organisation will:

- naturally include disabled people as part of a truly diverse workforce
- view disabled customers as an important and increasingly significant market segment and disabled people, their friends, families and colleagues as important stakeholders
- see the old way of looking at disability - which often results in discrimination because assumptions are made regarding what disabled people can and cannot do - as no longer acceptable
- be skilled in making adjustments and be more responsive to the potential contribution of every employee
- focus on the capacity and potential of the individual and empower disabled individuals (and indeed everyone) to contribute by making reasonable adjustments and as a result gain genuine business benefit.

## **Organisations which have scored above 57% (the average) are all taking action to:**

- establish policies to support disability in employment and product/service delivery
- put a team or individual in place to develop disability equality
- ensure adjustments are offered to every job applicant throughout recruitment and selection
- provide accessible training and development
- ensure non-discriminatory appraisal and promotion criteria
- provide accessible built environments to employees and customers
- retain employees who become disabled
- develop best practice absence and long-term sickness policies
- provide accessible information to every employee and customer
- consult with their disabled employees
- include disability in their social responsibility agenda.

The challenge for these organisations over the next year is to build on and to extend good practice. They need to ensure that commitment, responsibility and resources are focused on turning plans into actions and that they then assess the impact of what has been done.

For those 37 organisations scoring below the average of 57%, many have yet to position disability as a priority and have been unable to secure the resources and shared responsibility required to improve performance. Indeed, some will be at legal and reputational risk.

It is important to remember that this is a self-selecting group of public and private sector employers that recognises the need to address disability, is now publicly committed to self improvement, and has committed time and resources to this demanding benchmarking process.

If such a group of employers still continues to confront such obstacles to best practice, then surely the learning from this survey will be of interest to a much wider employer community.

# Conclusions

Despite the diversity of participants and the wide range of scores, there are a number of significant trends.

## Disability lags behind race and gender

For the first time we can compare performance on disability with that on race and gender. We are grateful to Race for Opportunity and Opportunity Now for sharing their data.

Comparisons across the 26 organisations which have now benchmarked on race, gender and disability show that disability is the poor relation.

Organisations do less and spend less on disability compared with their investment in race and gender. This pattern is even true for those companies that are outstanding in their commitment to self-improvement across all three diversity strands.

- 90% of organisations have an allocated budget to support race equality compared to just 48% on disability.
- 89% have policies to support race equality, 74% have policies to support gender equality while just 43% have policies to support disability equality.
- 93% assess impact of actions on race; 15% assess impact of actions on disability.

It would seem disability and disability discrimination are still regarded as distinctly different from - and less important than - race and gender. Discrimination legislation is not having the impact which some might have anticipated.

Our results suggest that many organisations have yet to understand that they are required to treat people differently in order to treat them fairly and that to discriminate on grounds of disability is fundamentally no different from discrimination on grounds of race or gender.

**The Employers' Forum will be inviting stakeholders concerned with disability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation and belief to consider the implications of these findings on plans to create the single equality body: the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.**

## Commitment at the top is not enough

While business leaders and those at the top of organisations tend to be genuinely committed, they are failing to communicate that commitment and are not tackling culture change.

- 79% of organisations have a stated commitment to disability, and 70% take responsibility for disability equality at Board level.
- But only 48% have set disability equality goals and just 46% have established the business and ethical case for their organisation to take action.
- What's more, only 28% are training their employees to become disability confident.

## The public sector needs to focus on service users

The public sector has scored slightly better than the private sector overall but the findings show that the public sector has much further to go in making its services accessible.

- Just 27% of the public sector design their market/service user research so that the specific needs and preferences of disabled people can be separately assessed.
- 49% of the public sector has senior management publicly committed to valuing disabled people as service users - that number is 72% for the private sector.
- 34% effectively monitor the impact of what they do on disabled people in the wider community.
- Just 17% effectively research the extent to which disabled people access their service.

Given the new duty to promote disability equality in everything they do, the public sector will need to focus in particular on improving its capacity to value and consult service users with disabilities.

We know that legislation can make a difference and that employers can find ways to comply. The DDA has ensured, for example, that 75% of respondents are now confident their built environment is fully accessible or have a schedule for improvements to make it so.

The public sector is leading the way in setting a disability vision, developing 'disability confident' behaviours and cultures through training, and consulting with disabled people.

But it is the private sector that is leading in putting the policies and standards in place to support disability in employment and service provision; inter-departmental action planning; and developing a business and ethical case for disability.

# Recommendations

## What does this mean for your organisation?

Those who scored above 75% demonstrate what can be achieved by 'disability confident' organisations. It is possible to:

- make disability - and the need to become disability confident - a business priority
- measure the impact of your diversity strategy by the impact you are having on people with disabilities and your capacity to become 'disability confident'
- ensure that your diversity strategy eliminates those particular attitudinal, policy and procedural barriers which prevent equality for disabled people
- help board-level champions to become 'disability confident' as individuals and to help make disability a priority.

## What we learn from the best?

There is a significant and surprising gap between the top and bottom scores. The average overall score for those in the top 10% is 89%: for those in the bottom 10% it is just 24%.

Organisations in the top 20% show that disability is integral to the way they now do business. A few organisations, from both the public and private sector, have scored very well indeed. They are equipped and motivated and would seem well-placed to recruit, retain and develop many more disabled employees and to deliver high quality services to disabled customers.

Meanwhile, those who scored below 25% are particularly vulnerable to legal and reputational risk. Employers have been required to make adjustments for people with disabilities in the workplace since 1995, yet only 34% have the necessary policies and procedures, and only 30% can respond to requests for adjustments in less than 28 days - a prudent response standard.

Eighteen organisations scored over 75% in the survey. This includes 11 public organisations and six companies from the FTSE 100. These high performers have much in common:

## **1) They have developed a shared commitment and accountability**

The top 18 have all set specific disability goals linked to the results of internal and external monitoring and have a clear business rationale for working on disability.

Their senior management have clearly stated their commitment to valuing disabled people both as employees and customers and their Boards take overall responsibility for becoming disability confident. Every top performing organisation has individuals or teams working effectively to help direct them towards disability confidence.

Fifteen of the top 18 are also building disability into every manager's performance goals and appraisal process and have set action plans with assigned resources across every business area.

## **2) They build strong policy and procedure foundations**

The top 18 all have policies to support disability in employment and product/service provision and are putting reasonable adjustment policies and procedures in place. They ensure that their recruitment and selection as well as their development processes do not discriminate against disabled employees. They also have procedures to retain employees who become disabled. Their premises are barrier free and they have action plans to help build a healthy workplace.

## **3) They focus on changing culture and behaviours**

For the top 18, disability is more than accessible premises and/or policies; they also understand the importance of developing disability confident behaviours and organisational cultures. Their disability training covers the organisation's legal obligations and policy expectations; the business and ethical case for disability, and the need to challenge assumptions and change behaviour. It also includes any specialist information relevant to those being trained.

They each have a disability communications' strategy to help build greater understanding of and support for the organisation's commitment to becoming disability confident. They also all publicise their disability achievements internally and externally.

## **4) They talk to disabled people**

Every organisation in the top 18 makes sure that all their information - including websites - is provided in accessible formats. They consult with their disabled staff on their experience of working in their organisation; 15 are taking action to ensure the views of disabled people can be identified in customer satisfaction surveys.

## 5) They make products and services accessible

Every leading organisation is working to make its products and services accessible by including the needs of disabled people in the design brief and reviewing accessibility regularly.

Seventeen are working towards ensuring that all their providers of outsourced services can demonstrate they are working to the spirit of disability legislation.

Each of the top 11 public sector organisations is researching the extent to which disabled people are accessing their services and that they are ensuring that their practices do not have a less favourable impact on disabled people.

They also work with other public bodies to ensure that every external facing employee is aware of the organisation's legal obligations in carrying out public functions.

## What next for your organisation?

The Employers' Forum Disability Standard makes it easier to turn your commitment into real business improvement.

Plan ahead to be part of the next Standard Survey, and access the confidential report, the seminars, Forum advice and the Standard Directory which serves as your navigational guide through the complex world of regulation, legislation and definitive guidance as well as the learning network of organisations involved.

**And remember:** attitudes and behaviours will only change when the organisation engages directly with disabled individuals in a way that builds relationships and mutual understanding.

# How can you improve your performance on disability?

## **Position disability as a diversity priority**

- Position disability as a business priority in all diversity-related communications.
- Measure the impact of any diversity strategy by the impact you are having on people with disabilities.
- Ensure any diversity strategy has eliminated those attitudinal, policy and procedural barriers which prevent disabled people from gaining equal access as employees and customers.
- Remember: attitudes and behaviours will only change when the organisation engages directly with disabled individuals in a way that builds relationships and mutual understanding.

## **Get the motivation right**

- Build a business, economic and ethical case for disability and communicate this to every employee through a combination of disability-specific training and mainstream communications.
- Make managers accountable for achieving progress by building disability into their performance objectives and the appraisal process.
- Spread accountability for disability by setting action plans across all areas of your business and by asking Board level champions to report on impact to the Board, and to communicate the rationale for disability confidence.

## **Be seen to mean it**

- Put policies and standards in place to support disability in employment and the delivery of products and services.
- Communicate your commitment, plans and progress on disability - map out the journey for employees and customers.

## **Focus on outcomes**

- Create a vision for what your organisation will look and feel like once you are disability confident.
- Always ask early in the planning process: 'how are we going to measure our performance on this disability action?'
- Mainstream disability into all your monitoring and reviewing processes (training attendance, promotion and appraisal results; satisfaction surveys etc).

## **Learn from each other**

- Share best practice with other organisations.
- Share experiences of what has worked and not worked and why, both internally and externally.
- Commit to benchmarking with other organisations and use the results to improve performance.

## **Make it easier on your colleagues**

Colleagues need to know where to go for guidance about best practice and what your organisation expects from them. Tell them:

- who can answer questions related to the DDA and your policies and expectations
- who can help managers find solutions on a day to day basis, e.g. via an in-house helpline or linked to the Employers' Forum
- who monitors progress and spreads success
- who co-ordinates moving into action
- who communicates disability performance to the Board.

## **Build the skills and competencies you need**

- Focus on attitudes and behaviours - help people understand how disability discrimination is experienced.
- Overcome fear and stereotyping and build personal skills and confidence through training, communication and events which facilitate personal contact between colleagues and people with disabilities.
- Make sure employees know how to communicate in an accessible way with colleagues and customers.

## **Get closer to your disabled customers and service users**

- Ensure your market research can identify the specific needs and preferences of disabled customers.
- Identify the nature of complaints coming from disabled customers.
- Build the needs of disabled people into the design brief for new products and services.
- Research the extent to which disabled people use your products and services.

# Designing the Disability Standard

## Research and trials

The Disability Standard was developed by the Employers' Forum on Disability and Dr Gillian Shapiro. The Survey was researched and trialled in partnership with 15 of our leading members who made up the Research & Development (R&D) Group and with the Forum's distinguished disabled associates.

### **The Disability Standard R&D Group**

Abbey; BT; BUPA; Barclays; Centrica; Cable & Wireless; HSBC; Royal Mail; PricewaterhouseCoopers; UnumProvident;

Plus

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Metropolitan Police Service, who joined Jobcentre Plus, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions in adapting the Standard to meet the needs of the public sector and the police service.

The Standard is underpinned by the Diversity Change Model© developed by Dr Shapiro from extensive research in the UK, Europe and in North America.

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employers'  
forum on  
disability

Employers' Forum on Disability  
Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY  
Tel: 020 7403 3020 • Fax: 020 7403 0404 • Minicom: 020 7403 0040  
Email: [enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk)  
Website: [www.employers-forum.co.uk](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk)

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Registered Office: Nutmeg House,  
60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY

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