



**PUBLIC RELATIONS  
DEI TOOLKIT FOR  
EMPLOYERS.**

Supported by



# THE TOOLKIT.



## Purpose

This Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) toolkit for employers is a structured, practical resource designed to help PR agencies and organisations with internal communications functions integrate DEI principles into their operations, from hiring to workplace culture. These toolkits provide frameworks, checklists, and best practices to help businesses, especially SMEs, foster a more inclusive environment, improve employee engagement, and drive innovation.

This document is designed to support employers within the PR community who want to implement programmes (such as placements or training) to promote inclusivity in their organisations or networks, or who are seeking to increase recruitment from marginalised groups into their workforce.

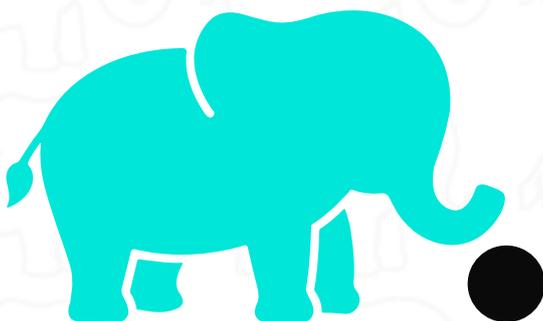
The toolkit provides information for employers on how to get started on their diversity journey, gives guidance on employing people from disadvantaged groups and assistance on managing these initiatives effectively

## Business Case

Diversity is about embracing difference, in all its forms. Inclusion is an environment where people feel valued and appreciated for that difference. If people feel valued, they will be able to achieve and contribute their full potential.

Diversity is good for business, and especially for Public Relations! Diverse teams work better and are more successful than homogenous ones. Numerous studies have outlined the business advantages of a diverse workforce including:

- Greater creativity
- Greater innovation
- Higher financial returns
- Increased objectivity
- More informed decision making
- More attractive to top talent





Millennials and Gen Z job applicants want to bring their whole selves to work and will only consider ethical companies that have a positive impact on the world. Job vacancies are at a record high, with skill shortages in almost every sector, including Public Relations.

By adopting diversity friendly employment practices your business can access a pipeline of diverse talent for roles at every skill level and address skills gaps.

For example, immigrants and refugees have a range of skills and experience, including proficiency in different languages and culture. Young people who have experienced educational barriers have a different mindset and bring cognitive diversity to the workplace. People with disabilities are innovative and creative problem-solvers as a result of living and navigating their way in an inaccessible world. In addition to these professional skills many refugees, asylum seekers, people with disabilities and disadvantaged young people have overcome significant adversity and developed a resilience and adaptability beneficial for a role in Public Relations.

Embracing diversity also opens new potential markets for businesses. By employing diverse groups, businesses can develop better products, goods and services to cater for these underrepresented groups.

To put this potential business opportunity in perspective, there are currently 643,131 people with a disability in Ireland. That is 1 in 7 of us or 13.5% of the population. However, only 36% of people with disabilities are in employment compared to 73% of the population without a disability. And as people acquire disabilities as they age, we can expect that number to increase significantly – by 2026, the number of Irish people with a disability is expected to have increased by 20%.

## Understanding the Barriers to Inclusive Employment within the PR Industry:

Despite having skills, experience and qualifications all diverse people struggle to gain employment.

A study conducted by UNHCR identified some of the main barriers refugees and asylum-seekers face in seeking employment in Ireland, including:

- English language deficiencies
- Long gaps in CVs as a result of long time spent without the right to work
- Employers' recognition of skills and experience
- Public and employer perceptions of refugees
- Racial discrimination
- A lack of support due to no employment support infrastructure





Other barriers may include: loss of confidence, institutionalisation as a result of long periods of time spent living in asylum-seeker accommodation; socio and cultural barriers due to deficiencies in information and knowledge of how the Irish labour market and recruitment process works; lack of affordable childcare and alternative options; experiences of homelessness, poverty or social exclusion; health problems, including mental health; unfamiliarity with immigration rules and permissions to work on the part of employers.

Young people under 25 with educational barriers also suffer from similar obstacles to employment including lacking confidence, gaps in CVs and relevant work experience.

Employers often fail to recognise their skills and abilities, failing to value alternative experience and knowledge. People with disabilities are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age, with some disabilities posing greater challenges than others at interviews.

According to AsIAM, over 85% of autistic people are under or unemployed. Attitudinal, physical and access barriers abound for all people with disabilities. In addition, there is the risk that by taking up employment people with disabilities will lose their secondary benefits and access to disability aids making them worse off.

However, the biggest barrier of all is perception and attitude which is affected by biases.

## AWARENESS

Research shows that we are heavily influenced by our experiences, beliefs and cultures. Information comes at us so quickly in life that we are hardwired to rapidly categorise people instinctively into groups. But we only have control over our conscious mind and remain largely unaware of our unconscious thoughts and actions.

Unconscious biases are essentially social stereotypes of certain groups of people which we form outside of our own conscious awareness – all human beings are biased and prone to falling into bias traps where we say or behave incorrectly towards a particular group. We don't even realise that we are doing it.

These biases are particularly influential in recruitment. We all feel affinity bias towards people who are like us and we naturally gravitate towards people who are similar to us in appearance, beliefs and background. We don't understand people who are different. There are many factors that shape our decision making such as:

**Performance awareness:** We underestimate certain diverse groups' performance level and overestimate others. For example, we might underestimate the performance of women compared to men or people with disabilities compared to those without a disability based on our experience.

**Likeability awareness:** We expect certain genders, different aged groups and abilities to behave a certain way. When they react differently, we like the person less.

**Attribution awareness:** Women and younger colleagues often get less credit for success and more blame for failure. Higher standards are expected.

**Intersectionality or Double Discrimination:** Bias isn't restricted to one aspect of identity. People can experience multiple biases because of their gender, religion, age, nationality, ability or race. The compound effect of biases can be greater than the sum of its parts and is known as intersectionality.

**Living in disadvantaged areas:** All cities have areas that disadvantaged people may be living in immediate proximity to prominent business districts but they remain hidden in plain sight. If they are to have a successful outcome in a workplace there must be an acceptance of their accent, their opinions and their potentially limited education opportunities.

To mitigate the risk of biases it is important to set the selection criteria for recruitment in advance of meeting any candidates. These criteria should reflect the skills and competencies required to fulfil the role. Recruitment and selection training for all those involved in the recruitment process is essential also.

## EQUALITY LEGISLATION

There are many pieces of legislation covering equality issues, most importantly the Equal Status Acts and the Employment Equality Acts which prohibit discrimination under nine grounds (i.e. Gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, race, disability, age, religion and membership of the traveller community) in the provision of goods, services, vocational training and employment. In addition, employers must make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

### EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY

Access to Training and Employment

Accessible Health & Safety

Employment Equality Acts 1995 - 2015

Equal Status Act 2000 - 2015

Disability Act 2005

Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005

Prohibits discrimination under 9 grounds

Public sector positive action measures

Regulation 25

Appropriate measures

Reasonable Accommodation

3% - 6% Employment Target

Reasonable accommodations are changes, supports or modifications made by an employer which would enable an employee with a disability to do a job or task to the best of their ability. Equality legislation states that employers must make accommodations to tasks, structures or the work environment to enable an employee to enjoy equal employment opportunities. There is further information on reasonable accommodations below.



The Employment Equality Acts also state that an employer must take appropriate measures to meet the need of a diverse range of users (e.g., age, race and disability). Employers have to make arrangements that will make sure people with a disability have equal opportunities for job applications, training and promotion as well as receiving equal treatment as their co-workers.

There are also responsibilities on employers to provide a safe place of work under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act in particular for employees with disabilities.

The Disability Act 2005 applies to public bodies only, and places a statutory obligation on them to make services and buildings accessible, and pursue positive action measures in employing people with disabilities. The target quota for the employment of people with disabilities is 6% since 2024. The National Disability Authority is tasked with monitoring compliance and implementation.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is the statutory, independent public body whose aim is to promote and protect human rights and equality, while building a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State.

For more information on employers' legal obligations on equality and promoting human rights, please visit the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's website at [www.ihrec.ie](http://www.ihrec.ie).

## FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

### INSPIRE

#### Pre-Employment Interventions

Some jobseekers who are refugees, young people or people with disabilities may have a reluctance to put themselves forward for a recruitment process.

Partnering with local groups and non-for profit organisations to assist in the development of a pre-employment programme can build confidence to apply for positions. This not only markets the employer as an employer of choice but provides invaluable expertise to the community.

Building this resilience provides potential employees with the confidence to prepare, be interview ready and enables them to demonstrate their competency for the role. This in turn provides employers with the information to identify suitable candidates.



## Educate Staff at All Levels

Many of the jobseekers who are refugees, young people and people with disabilities have had great difficulty seeking work and may have experienced discrimination from many quarters in their search for work. They may also experience intersectionality where they may experience biases due to their race, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, age or other aspects of their identity, this interconnected discrimination can be greater than simply being treated differently on one ground. For example, being a Muslim female refugee of colour with mental health difficulties would be more marginalised than her male counterparts without a disability.

The best way to overcome inherent biases, misplaced perceptions and prepare for an inclusive recruitment process is to engage in training and awareness raising with staff, in particular people managers.

It is important to go beyond simply identifying unconscious biases – it is likely that many staff members may not have had experience of meeting or interacting with people with disabilities, refugees/asylum seekers or young people with educational barriers. They may be unaware of the challenges for these groups and would greatly benefit from specific training to fully recognise people's abilities.

## Gather Diversity Data

Diversity data is data that informs you of how diverse your workforce is. This information will provide better awareness for strategies to attract, hire, and retain a diverse workforce. This information will allow you to determine what outreach efforts could be made to encourage and promote the inclusion of some of the marginalised members of our society.

This information will also provide you with the insight into internal measures that can be taken to be more inclusive with your current workforce. Knowing the diversity of your workforce allow you to tailor educational programmes to meet their needs. For example, should a proportion of your workforce come from individuals who have/had refugee status there may be a requirement to develop education programmes on employment policies and employment rights.





## Audit Your Policies & Procedures

Establish where you are now and where you would like to go with your diversity efforts. Audit your existing policies, practices and procedures and identify gaps for improvement. Consider what groups are underrepresented in your organisation and review your most recent recruitment campaign to analyse how or if you are attracting diverse candidates.

Review your employee profile paying attention to the nine grounds of discrimination.

Analyse employee engagement surveys and new hire data. Request diversity information from staff on a regular basis so you can measure your diversity efforts.

The following checklist can be used to determine your current diversity status.

INFORMATION	YES	No
Do we gather diversity data?		
Is our website accessible in line with international standards and good practices? E.g enable users to resize text, fully writing our acronyms to assist clear understanding for users		
POLICIES		
Is equality, diversity and inclusion important in your organisation? E.g. Is it integrated into the overall strategy, is it on the management agenda?		
If yes to above, is a senior member of management assigned, committed, involved and driving strategy forward?		
Policies that encompass Equality, Inclusion and Diversity		
Incorporate diversity and inclusion in our recruitment policy and processes		
Do our onboarding and return to work policies include identification of diversity needs?		
Disclosure policy and process in place		
HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES		
Do we carry our employee surveys on diversity and inclusion		
Is there a rise in HR enquiries or issues relating to diversity and inclusion?		
How can applicants request accommodations?		
What happened the last time someone requested accommodations?		
Do we have flexible working policies? Do they apply to all staff?		
RECRUITMENT PRACTICES		
Is our online recruitment portal accessible?		
How do we shortlist candidates? Is it based on criteria and attributes that people with disabilities, refugees/asylum seekers or young people with educational barriers. Are we restricting our pool of candidates based on our criteria, e.g. stating experience in Irish based environment?		
WORKING ENVIRONMENT		
Is our environment accessible for all and universally designed?		
Have we considered our diverse workforce in our communications? E.g. signage, language		
Is our workplace environment accessible?		
Do we have a dedicated access and Universal Design policies and action plans?		
Do we review our workplace on with our diverse workforce in mind?		

To find out more click [here](#)

## Analyse Job Descriptions, Advertising and Onboarding Process

Job descriptions and adverts don't always adequately describe the actual job. It may be outdated or has not been re-evaluated for a while. Think about what the job really entails. Beware of making a role sound more important and complex than it is in reality, use Plain English and make it as accessible as possible, giving people the opportunity to request information in alternative formats. For example, social stories work well for people with ASD or someone who is not a native English speaker, as well as a young person with minimal educational opportunities.

Job descriptions which specify a 'good level' of English can be off-putting for refugees still developing their language skills. For some roles an ability to understand and communicate in English will be essential, but others, even within the Public Relations industry, may allow for a degree of flexibility. Consider whether key instructions (such as health and safety) could be translated. Think about how someone could do the job differently. For example, does the job have to involve talking on the phone or could someone use email or instant messaging for team communications?

Consider how your induction process welcomes diverse employees. What could you change for these groups? Do you inform all new employees about your commitment to diversity?

To find out more, see [Employer Disability Info](#) and [National Disability Authority](#)

## Gather Diversity Data

Gather your diversity champions and create relationships with support organisations.

Set up Employee Resource Groups (ERG) in all areas – disability, age, ethnicity/ race, religion, gender.

Get senior leadership buy in and sponsorship for each group.

Recruit interested and motivated staff to lead it to ensure that it moves beyond being simply a HR exercise.

Partner with organisations supporting refugees, people with disabilities and educationally disadvantaged youth groups to create a referral pipeline for your work placements or internships.

Deliver work preparation activities for refugees, people with disabilities and young people – all employees will benefit from volunteering and working with such groups.



## Gather Diversity Data continued...

Create specific programmes for inclusion of all three groups such as ring-fenced roles for diverse candidates and work experience programmes.

Recruit staff, leadership, clients and suppliers to your diversity and inclusion agenda by rolling out an awareness and information campaign. Establish a positive to diversity environment by hosting events, such as lunch and learn programmes, and committing to your diversity objectives.

Identify internal inclusion champions who are willing to share their experience and incorporate them into the company's recruitment inclusion program. They provide demonstrable evidence of inclusivity and the company's commitment to a diverse and inclusive working environment.

Take advantage of the many government grants and schemes to support your diverse employment initiatives by contacting your local Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection office.

## HIRE

Mainstream recruitment practices can be very challenging for diverse candidates. As they present differently than traditional applicants, it can be challenging for diversity to break through the shortlisting process and be assessed fairly and equitably. Essentially, employers should hire for potential and not knowledge. Conduct job and person analyses to identify the essential criteria required for role. Develop a competency-based job description and consider the following questions:

### Essential Functions

- What are the core, essential skills needed for this role?
- What is the relationship between the tasks involved in the job? Is there a special sequence which they must follow?
- What physical activities are required to undertake the job?
- How is the job organised in the overall work environment? Could some reorganisation improve the opportunity for someone with a disability, a refugee/asylum seeker or young person?
- Would removing or changing some of the tasks to accommodate someone with a disability fundamentally alter the job?
- Review the level of English needed for a role and be specific about this in the job description and advert.
- Consider whether key instructions could be translated.



## Work Environment

- Where are the essential functions of the job carried out?
- How is the work organised for maximum safety and efficiency?
- What are the physical conditions of the job setting (indoors, outdoors, underground, air-conditioned, noisy, sudden temperature changes, etc.)?
- What are the social conditions of the job (works alone, works around others, works with clients and/or media, works under close supervision, works under minimal supervision, works to deadlines)?
- Is the work culture welcoming to difference?

## Skills/Qualifications/ Experience

- What are the general skills needed for the job?
- What specific training is necessary? Can it be obtained on the job?
- What previous experience, if any, can be substituted for the specific training requirements?
- Have you ensured that you are using a competency-based interview process that focuses on positive behaviours, attitudes and aspirations rather than previous experience?
- Are you valuing experience outside Ireland if previous experience is a requirement for a role?
- Do you accept testimonials or character references that are not from previous employers e.g. from social workers, teachers, sponsors or mentors?

## DEVELOP A JOB PROFILE & PERSON SPECIFICATION

Following analysis, a suitable and detailed job profile can be drafted. This can help you to find the right match between the requirements of the job and the qualifications and abilities of the applicants. The job profile should:

- Make a distinction between essential and desirable requirements for the job
- Be clear in the language used and, where possible, avoid jargon
- Encourage the application of a suitably qualified person with less experience, who can improve with on-the-job training
- Consider, where feasible, non-mainstream educational qualifications



The person specification is drawn up based on the job profile. It sets out the requirements for the job in terms of qualifications, skills and experience - only include essential skills for the job and be willing to consider alternatives. For example, is verbal communication a core requirement if staff usually communicate using email and chat?

Is fluent English key to this role if the successful applicant will be working through another language? Is a third level qualification crucial or would appropriate skills suffice?

Think about what your ideal candidate looks like – do they have a disability? Are they a refugee or asylum seeker? Have they had as many educational opportunities as their peers? Are they young and enthusiastic but inexperienced? Be open minded to the type of person who could successfully do the role so you can judge applicants objectively.

## APPLICATIONS, TESTING, SHORTLISTING

### Applications

Flexibility is key. Online applications and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can often be discriminatory, simply because it was designed by non-diverse teams to be used on a typical type of applicant. Many multinational employers are starting to use AI to analyse applicants' facial expressions and personalities. However, it fails to accurately recognise difference; racial difference, physical differences such as a person who has had a stroke, facial scarring, facial apraxia or paralysis. Make sure that your website and recruitment portal is accessible to all potential applicants, regardless of age, race or ability.

Consider how do applicants with disabilities request reasonable accommodations. Provide an alternative means for people with disabilities to contact the company to request accommodations at interview from a designated contact person. Offer alternatives to online applications that may disadvantage refugees and asylum-seekers who cannot access the internet or have poor IT skills. For example, participate in a work experience programme and use the work trial as a guide to their suitability for the role instead of applying through traditional recruitment methods.

Welcome applications from people with disabilities, refugees/asylum seekers and young people by stating that you accommodate the needs of all candidates and are an inclusive employer. If you are unsure how to provide the accommodation, seek help to find out from a specialist organisation. Contact support organisations and supported employment schemes to encourage applications from diverse communities.



## Shortlisting



At this stage, diverse applicants are often screened out of standard recruitment processes. Their CVs and applications look different to other applicants and they may have gaps, less work experience and alternative qualifications.

Many companies take a positive action measure to include and state that applicants who meet the qualification requirements and have disclosed a diverse element on their CV or application form will be automatically invited to interview. That way, you are communicating your commitment to include and encouraging the disclosure from applicants.

Avoid using telephone interviews which can be challenging for a refugee and asylum-seeker who struggles with English language or a Deaf person, offer alternatives to diverse candidates.

## Testing

Some companies use assessment centres and online testing. These tools can prove a huge barrier to diverse applicants, in particular non-visible disabilities such as mental health. Consider whether you can waive this requirement for diverse applicants, if you are seeking to include. A work trial or placement may be a better way to assess their abilities.

## COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

The main purpose is to establish whether applicants have the skills and capability to do the essential and core elements of the job. You don't need to change your interview process – just ensure it is competency based to get the best result.

- Members of the interview panel should be appropriately trained
- Ensure that applicants have the supports they need. Be open to proposals from refugees, asylum-seekers and young people to bring an interpreter, job coach or facilitator to the job interview
- Ask all applicants job-related competency-based questions. All candidates should be asked the same open and direct questions about their ability to perform the functions of the role
- Ask how someone will complete the tasks and ask it of all applicants
- Encourage candidates to use the STAR method; Situation (context), Task (challenge), Action (steps taken), and Result (outcomes/impact), and inform applicants of what you are expecting from them
- Don't worry about a disability or how it may impact at work. Focus on the ability of candidates
- Be open-minded as to how the job can be done – people will approach tasks differently
- Watch the scoring for biases
- Give guidance and provide training to interviewers explaining different cultural expectations which might affect interview technique



## Alternative Options – Internships & Placements

Internships and placements can provide refugees, asylum-seekers, young people and people with disabilities the opportunity to develop their skills and adapt to a working environment.

Make use of internships, and work placements or trials. Work placements which provide training on the job can also enable refugees to learn new skills and qualifications or adapt their experience for a new sector.

Work placements, internships and training programmes can provide refugees and asylum-seekers, young people and people with disabilities who may be disadvantaged by a standard application process the opportunity to demonstrate the aptitude and attitude needed for a role.

- Partner with supporting organisations to create a referral pipeline for your work placements
- Organise induction training and appoint a mentor to help participants settle in quickly, making sure that important instructions are understood
- Ensure participants are given a variety of work to do, rather than simply shadowing
- De-brief participants once the placement has ended and support them to develop an employment action plan

## Disclosure

Disclosure is telling an employer about a disability. The decision to disclose is the choice of the person with the disability and is often based on personal factors; such as previous experiences, disability type, feelings of self-worth and identity, personality, conditions and attitudes, stigma. The work environment or organisational culture also has an impact as well as the attitudes of colleagues, managers and the physical built environment at work. For example, open plan offices can be very difficult for people with hearing impairments, mental health issues, visual impairments and neurodiversity.

Partial disclosure is very frequent as many people have multiple disabilities e.g. mental health issues as well as dyslexia, IBS as well as anxiety. Disclosure then only happens with the 'socially acceptable' disability and not all the supports needed in the workplace are discussed.



## Guiding Rules for Disclosure

- Give them time to explain their disability to you as they may be nervous about confiding such personal information to a stranger/employer and may be wary of a negative reaction
- Treat the information in a highly confidential manner
- Avoid asking questions about their disability which do not relate to the job in question. You can ask them about whether they will require any supports in employment. They may even be able to tell you what supports they require or where to access the information
- Contact your local Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection office for information on the types of grants and supports that are available to you
- In the case of an interview, do not diverge from the list of interview questions. It is very important to ask the same questions of all candidates
- Assume that it is possible to accommodate the person's disability. This can be discussed at a later stage if the person is successful. Try not to get waylaid by worries about whether you will be able to provide the necessary accommodations
- Remember the decision to disclose is the choice of the person with a disability and they may choose not to disclose or seek supports
- Finally, do not make any firm decisions or conclusions based on a person's disability. Be open to difference and focus on their knowledge and abilities instead.

## THRIVE

### Reasonable Accommodations & Appropriate Measures

**Reasonable accommodations are changes, supports or modifications made by an employer which would enable an employee with a disability to do a job or task to the best of their ability. Equality legislation states that employers must make**

**accommodations to tasks, structures or the work environment to enable an employee to enjoy equal employment opportunities.**

**Appropriate measures mean effective and practical changes that the employer puts in place to enable employees with a disability to carry out their work on an equal footing with others.**

**These include:** *Please see next page*

**Adapting the premises or the equipment, for example, installing wheelchair ramps, providing special computers for the visually impaired, installing loop systems, and so on**

**Offering flexible working times**

**Providing training or other supports that might help**

**Adjusting an employee's attendance hours or allowing them to work from home; or**

**Assigning an employee certain tasks, and substituting others for equivalent duties, in consultation with the employee**

**The employer is not obliged to provide anything that the person would normally provide for themselves. For example, an employer would not be expected to provide hearing aids for a person with impaired hearing.**

**In order to know which appropriate measures to put in place, employers need to understand the practical needs of people with disabilities, including those of people with experience of mental health difficulties. This can be gained through consultation with employees with disabilities, often with the assistance of a support group.**

**An employer might not have to provide these types of appropriate measures if it meant that the employer would suffer a 'disproportionate burden'. In order to establish what a 'disproportionate burden' is for the employer, several things are taken into account.**

**These include:**

- **The financial cost of the measures involved**
- **Other costs involved, for example, staff time or impact on productivity**
- **The size and financial resources of the employer's business**

**Before an employer can claim that providing reasonable accommodation measures or facilities would place them under a 'disproportionate burden', they must look at the possibility of obtaining public funding, grants and so on. If help is available to them, it might make the changes possible. Many reasonable accommodation measures would not necessarily have a cost implication – such as flexible work arrangements or facilitating part-time work.**

## **Create a System to Assess Needs & Supports**

**When employing a diverse candidate, in particular a person with disabilities, set up a system to provide reasonable accommodations.**



# HOW TO MANAGE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AT WORK?



**Ask the Person!** If you would like support, get in touch with a specialist organisation for further information and assistance.

Accommodations should be made on a case-by-case basis and involve discussions between the employer and employee or applicant.

## Step One:

Assess the impact of the disability and decide where there may be limitations in performing the essential functions of the job. The person with a disability is the expert and knows how their disability will impact on them, if at all, in the workplace.

## Step Two:

Identify the employee's workplace accommodation needs by:

- Involving the employee who has the disability in every step of the process
- Exploring ways of providing workplace accommodations
- Using job descriptions and job profiles to analyse essential functions of the job
- Consulting with the individual to ascertain the precise job-related functional limitations and how these could be overcome with potential accommodations
- Deciding if and how co-workers who may be affected by any of the proposed accommodations will be informed
- Consulting with rehabilitation professionals where necessary

## Step Three:

Select and implement the most reasonable and effective accommodation that is also the most appropriate for the employee and employer. Remember: Accommodations selected should be effective, reliable, easy to use, and readily available for the employee needing the accommodation.

## Step Four:

An employee with a disability and their line manager should review such accommodations at regular intervals. Over time, special provisions may no longer be needed or requirements may change. An employee should advise their line manager of any changes that are needed.

## Step Five:

Provide follow-up, if needed, by: modifying the accommodation if necessary; repeating the steps outlined above if appropriate. As an employer, you are not obliged to provide employees with equipment they would normally provide themselves – for example, reading glasses or hearing aids.



## MENTORING/COACHING

Mentoring or coaching can be very useful for a diverse candidate (e.g. refugees, young people). In addition, having a buddy or co-worker who can support the candidate and is outside of management structures can help someone settle into the organisation.

Both coaching and mentoring are processes that enable individuals to achieve their full potential.

Coaching and mentoring share many similarities, so it makes sense to outline the common things coaches and mentors do whether the services are offered in a paid (professional) or unpaid (philanthropic) role.

### Workplace Buddy & Mentor

Reasonable accommodation and adjustments facilitate enabling an employee to carry out their role. Refugees, asylum-seekers, young people and people with disabilities who enter into employment for the first time or after a prolonged period of time have an adjustment to make, irrespective of reasonable accommodations. This adjustment can be as simple as being required to attend the workplace at set time periods, reporting structures or how to behave in a work environment.

Workplace buddies assist with this adjustment by providing guidance on day to day activities and assistance on sourcing information. For example, identifying the local transport infrastructure to enable on-time attendance. A workplace buddy also develops an understanding on individual circumstances and can provide an advocacy role if required. Training staff to become workplace buddies encourages an inclusive culture and provides for additional peer support for those joining the workforce.

A workplace mentors is an experienced guide who provides advice, support, and knowledge to help a colleague develop skills, navigate challenges, and advance their career. They act as a trusted sounding board, sharing experiences to foster professional growth, expand networks, and help mentees reach their full potential.

## TYPES OF MENTORING:

- **Traditional:** A senior employee guides a junior staff member.
- **Peer:** Colleagues at similar levels exchange skills and support.
- **Reverse:** A junior employee mentors a senior leader, often focusing on new technology or perspectives.

### Benefits:

Mentors help employees build confidence, gain visibility, and improve performance. For organisations, it increases employee retention and promotes a collaborative, inclusive environment.



## BEST PRACTICES:

- **Mentees** should come prepared with specific goals or agendas, rather than just asking “will you be my mentor?”
- **Mentors** should clearly define expectations regarding time commitment, meeting frequency, and communication methods.
- **Structure:** Effective mentorship often includes setting clear, actionable goals and providing honest feedback.

A good mentor is someone with whom you have a natural rapport, often found through professional networking, previous collaboration, or by observing someone whose career path you admire.

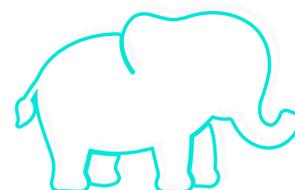
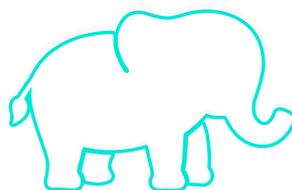
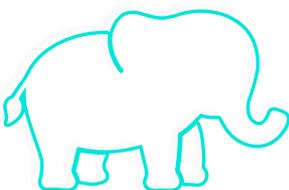
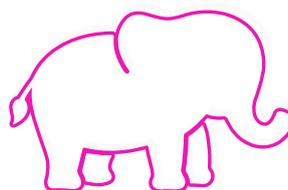
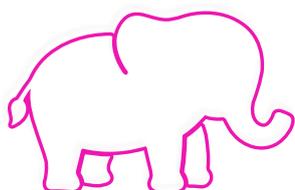
## Health & Safety

Ensure that the health and safety needs of all diverse candidates are taken into account. Create a personal emergency evacuation plan for people with disabilities. For candidates with mental health issues, establish an action plan that looks at triggers and warning signs. A Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) can also be very useful for supporting an employee with mental health issues.

Make sure that refugees and asylum seekers receive health and safety information in their own language where possible.

Regularly liaise with staff and stakeholders to assess their requirements, in particular if they have a disability. Make sure that you have updated your Safety statements and egress plans.

Remember to put accessibility and diversity on the agenda of all health and safety team meetings and use the resources from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA).





## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

### Promotion & Progression

Ensure to provide progression pathways for all diverse employees. It is important for your business to understand the career ambitions of any refugees and asylum-seekers you employ and provide any additional support they may need to achieve them. Similarly treat people with disabilities and young people in the same way as other employees when looking at progression opportunities.

- Define and communicate progression pathways for all roles, with incremental progression steps where possible
- Develop an internal mentoring scheme for refugees and asylum-seeker you recruit to help strengthen and expand their educational and employment-related networks and opportunities
- Ensure progression opportunities are equally accessible for part-time and flexible workers
- Ensure that training is accessible for all employees regardless of work patterns, travel and location
- Deliver a range of training, from bite-size sessions to softer skills
- Help refugees to improve their English language skills within the workplace
- Create a clear reporting/appraisal process

### WHAT TO DO WHEN IT ALL GOES WRONG

If you are experiencing difficulties when a diverse employee begins to struggle, address the issue early, when problems arise in the workplace.

In the case of people with disabilities, revisit the reasonable accommodations to see whether they are meeting the need. Supports and accommodations can change over time so you may need to start the reasonable accommodation process again. Check whether the issue is disability related or performance related. Are there any undisclosed problems? Open up discussion to assess what is really happening. In the case of a refugee/asylum seekers or young person, make sure that they are aware of the performance expected of them and where they are failing in achieving their performance targets.



In all cases, inform the person clearly of the issues. However, double check that there is no correlation between their poor performance and their aspect of difference. Are they underperforming as a result of a manager or co-workers' actions or attitudes? If necessary, address behavioural issues in a sensitive manner but warn them that the process will move to a disciplinary one if there is no change. Implement a performance improvement plan and guide them through it with the support of a mentor or buddy.

Get help from a support organisation for the benefit of all parties, in particular to advocate for the diverse employee where needed.

## LGBTQ+ INCLUSION TOOLKIT

It is central to organisation culture to have a policy that stands with and supports LGBTQ+ employees in every aspect of their work and, often, in their personal lives.

Meaningful policies signal that LGBTQ+ staff are valued and protected. They reduce the risk of harassment, bullying, or/and exclusion and promote psychological safety, allowing people to be themselves at work and can just focus on doing their job with pride and passion. Employees who feel respected are more engaged, productive, and loyal and are less likely to leave, reducing turnover and hiring costs (Perales, 2022). Many younger generations in Ireland expect their employers to reflect progressive social values.

Employers who lead with inclusion, set industry standards and contribute to a more equal society. Modern Ireland is diverse and inclusive in culture. Effective policies reflect the values of fairness and equality embedded in Irish public life. They can align companies with national initiatives like LGBT Ireland, TENI, or the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Leadership should be visible and engaged in inclusivity efforts, and clear that management also have personal lives that may affect work dynamics and need to be considered. The implementation of a gender identity policy and the introduction of pronoun options in email signatures demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity, though the awareness of these policies among staff needs improvement. Fostering inclusivity requires relatively modest efforts, primarily involving policy review and open conversations, rather than extensive overhauls. The goal is to create an environment where all employees feel respected and valued.

Setting up for success all year round, not just in June:

- **Policies backed by action (training, facility changes, healthcare)**
- **Employee-centred implementation (customised support plans, confidential handling)**
- **Accountability and enforcement (clear consequences for policy breaches)**
- **Year-round engagement (active ERGs, leadership involvement beyond Pride)**

# CONCLUSION.

## THE BENEFITS OF USING A DEI TOOLKIT

- **Talent Acquisition & Retention:** Diverse teams improve recruitment and increase employee satisfaction.
- **Enhanced Performance:** Companies with strong DEI initiatives often see better financial returns and higher innovation.
- **Legal Compliance:** Helps employers meet obligations regarding discrimination and equality legislation.

