

# **Guide to Ensuring Accessible and Inclusive Recruitment Processes for Individuals with Disabilities**



Creating an inclusive recruitment process is essential for attracting diverse talent and ensuring equal opportunities for everyone. This guide provides practical steps for employers to make their recruitment processes more accessible and inclusive for individuals with disabilities throughout the various stages of recruitment.

According to the 2022 census 1.1 million people in Ireland are identified as having a disability, meaning that one in five individuals may require some form of accessibility support. Despite this, only 32.6% of people with disabilities are employed, making them twice as likely to face unemployment due to barriers in the recruitment process. This puts Ireland at the bottom of the employment rankings in the EU for individuals with disabilities. Implementing these simple strategies can significantly enhance the recruitment process, creating more employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



## 1. Crafting Inclusive Job Advertisements

Many of the obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities during recruitment stem from a lack of awareness or unconscious bias, rather than deliberate discrimination. When writing job ads, it is important to create inclusive and accessible content that encourages a diverse range of candidates to apply. This involves using clear and simple language, demonstrating your commitment to accessibility, and focusing on essential job functions. Additionally, offering multiple application methods ensures that all candidates, including those with disabilities, can engage with the recruitment process easily. By following these guidelines, you can create job ads that attract a wider talent pool and promote an inclusive workplace.

### a. Use Clear and Accessible Language

**Avoid Jargon:** Use simple, straightforward language that is easy to understand. You can refer to our article “The Power of Plain English” to understand why it is good for business.

**Use Inclusive Language:** Phrases like “we welcome applications from all individuals” signal inclusivity.

## b. Highlight Commitment to Accessibility

**Accessibility Statement:** Include a statement in the job ad that emphasises your commitment to providing accommodations with a recommended point of contact.

**Example:** “We are committed to making our recruitment process accessible to all candidates. If you require any accommodations, please let us know.”, add a contact name, email or phone number to create a point of contact whenever needed. A direct contact is better as people may not feel comfortable disclosing their need to a general email.

## c. Focus on Essential Job Functions

**Separate Essential from Non-Essential Duties:** Clearly outline which tasks are essential and which are desirable. This helps candidates with disabilities assess their suitability.

**Avoid Unnecessary Requirements:** Do not list skills or physical abilities that are not essential for the job.

## d. Provide Multiple Application Methods

**Online and Offline Options:** Ensure candidates can apply in diverse ways, such as through an accessible online portal, email, or phone.



## 2. Making the Application Process Accessible

Research shows that businesses that prioritise accessibility in recruitment attract a more diverse talent pool, achieve 8x better business outcomes, and perform 3x better than those that overlook accessibility. These companies are also twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets and see a 28% increase in revenue generation. By making your application process accessible, you are taking a strategic step toward driving business growth and maximising capital gains—the core objective of any successful business.

### a. Accessible Online Application Systems

**Use Accessible Platforms:** Ensure your online application system is compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies.

**Test for Accessibility:** Regularly test your application platform for accessibility using tools like WAVE or AXE.

## b. Offer Accommodations Upfront

**Proactively Offer Accommodations:** In your application form, include a section asking if applicants need any accommodations during the process. And this should be considered at every stage of the employment process.

## c. Provide Alternative Formats

**Alternative Formats for Job Ads:** Offer job descriptions in different formats, such as large print, Braille, or audio versions, upon request.

## d. Ensure Physical Accessibility

**Accessible Location:** If interviews or tests are conducted in person, ensure the location is accessible to individuals with mobility challenges.

**Virtual Interviews:** Offer virtual interview options for those who cannot attend in person.



### 3. Conducting Inclusive Interviews

To ensure an inclusive interview process, it is essential to train your recruitment team in disability awareness and provide the necessary accommodation. By focusing on candidates' abilities and offering support such as extended time or interpreters, you create a fair and respectful experience for all applicants. Additionally, adapting interview questions to avoid assumptions and emphasize problem-solving skills allows candidates to highlight their strengths. These practices help foster an equitable hiring environment that values diversity.

#### a. Train Interviewers on Disability Awareness

**Disability Awareness Training:** Provide training to your recruitment team on how to interact with candidates with disabilities respectfully and effectively.

**Focus on Abilities:** Emphasise assessing a candidate's skills and experience rather than focusing on their disability.



#### b. Offer Interview Accommodations

**Ask in Advance:** During the interview scheduling process, ask candidates if they need any accommodations.

Examples of Accommodations:

- Extended time for assessments or interviews.
- Providing interview questions in advance.
- Allowing service animals.
- Offering sign language interpreters.

#### c. Adapt Interview Questions

**Avoid Assumptions:** Do not make assumptions about what a candidate can or cannot do based on their disability.

**Focus on Problem-Solving:** Ask open-ended questions that allow candidates to demonstrate how they approach challenges.

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## 4. Setting Inclusive Selection Criteria

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### a. Evaluate Based on Ability to Perform Essential Functions

**Job-Related Criteria:** Ensure selection criteria are related to the essential functions of the job.

**Consider Reasonable Accommodations:** If a candidate meets the qualifications with reasonable accommodations, they should not be disadvantaged.

### b. Avoid Bias in Selection

**Structured Interviews:** Use a structured interview process with standardised questions to reduce unconscious bias.

**Diverse Hiring Panels:** Include diverse perspectives in your hiring panel to ensure a fair evaluation.

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## 5. Legal Compliance and Best Practices

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To create an inclusive recruitment process, it is crucial to understand your legal obligations and promote a workplace that values diversity. For Irish employers, this includes complying with the Employment Equality Acts and providing reasonable accommodations, while non-Irish employers should adhere to laws like the ADA in the U.S. or the Equality Act in the UK. Equally important is documenting your process to ensure transparency and fairness, as well as fostering an inclusive workplace culture through supportive policies and regular training on diversity and inclusion. These steps help create a fair and welcoming environment for all candidates.

### a. Understand Your Legal Obligations

**For Irish Employers:**

**Equality Acts (Ireland):** The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 prohibit discrimination on various grounds, including disability. Irish employers must provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities to help them perform their jobs unless it imposes a disproportionate burden on the employer.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Includes making adjustments to the physical environment, altering work hours, or providing special equipment.

**The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC):** This body oversees the enforcement of equality legislation and provides guidelines for employers on making their recruitment processes inclusive.

**Non-Irish Employers:**

**ADA Compliance (U.S.):** Familiarise yourself with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and ensure your practices comply with its requirements.

**Equality Act (UK):** In the UK, follow the Equality Act, which mandates non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals.

You can always cross-check with the laws in the country where you are trying to implement these measures.

## **b. Document Your Process**

**Keep Records:** Document how decisions are made at each stage of the recruitment process to demonstrate fairness and compliance.

**Feedback Mechanism:** Provide a way for candidates to give feedback on their experience to help improve your process.

## **c. Promote an Inclusive Workplace Culture**

**Inclusive Policies:** Develop and promote policies that encourage inclusivity, such as flexible working arrangements and disability support programs.

**Ongoing Training:** Regularly train staff on diversity and inclusion to foster a welcoming environment for all employees.



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## 6. Continuous Improvement

### a. Seek Feedback and Act on It

**Gather Feedback:** Repeatedly ask candidates, including those with disabilities, for feedback on your recruitment process.

**Implement Changes:** Use this feedback to make ongoing improvements to your practices.

### b. Stay Updated

**Monitor Legal Changes:** Keep abreast of any changes in disability legislation to ensure ongoing compliance.

**Engage with Disability Advocacy Groups:** Partner with disability Organisations to stay informed about best practices and emerging issues.

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## 7. Resources and Tools

### a. Assistive Technology Tools

**Screen Readers:** Use screen readers like JAWS or NVDA to test the accessibility of your job application portals.

**Accessibility Checkers:** Tools like WAVE or AXE can help evaluate the accessibility of online content.



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## b. External Resources

**Open Doors Initiative Recruitment Toolkit:** This Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit is a practical and evidence-based method of implementing an inclusive recruitment process in the workplace to help employers attract a diverse workforce and increase productivity and workflow.

### **For Irish Employers:**

**Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC):** Offers guidance on equality and non-discrimination practices in the workplace.

**National Disability Authority (NDA):** Provides information and support on how to make workplaces more inclusive for people with disabilities in Ireland.

**EmployAbility Service Ireland:** A national employment support service for people with disabilities, which can also provide advice to employers.

**Employers for Change:** A program of the Open Doors Initiative funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth to train and support employers about disability within the workplace in Ireland.

### **Non-Irish Employers:**

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** Offers advice on accommodations and disability employment.

**Access to Work (UK):** A government program that supports workplace adaptations.

## Conclusion

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Creating an accessible and inclusive recruitment process is not just about compliance; it is about tapping into a broader talent pool and fostering a diverse workplace. By following these practical steps, employers can ensure that their recruitment practices are fair, accessible, and inclusive for all candidates, including those with disabilities.

This guide is designed to be a practical resource for employers of all sizes. By implementing these strategies, you can make a significant positive impact on your recruitment processes, ensuring that all candidates have an equal opportunity to succeed.



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