



Disability Inclusion in Recruitment and Beyond

A guide to attracting, recruiting and retaining disabled and neurodivergent talent.

With insights from:

the clear company



Sainsbury's

next

CUNDALL

We all want to feel like we belong.

It's human nature.

In achieving a sense of belonging, we must first feel accepted and included by others.

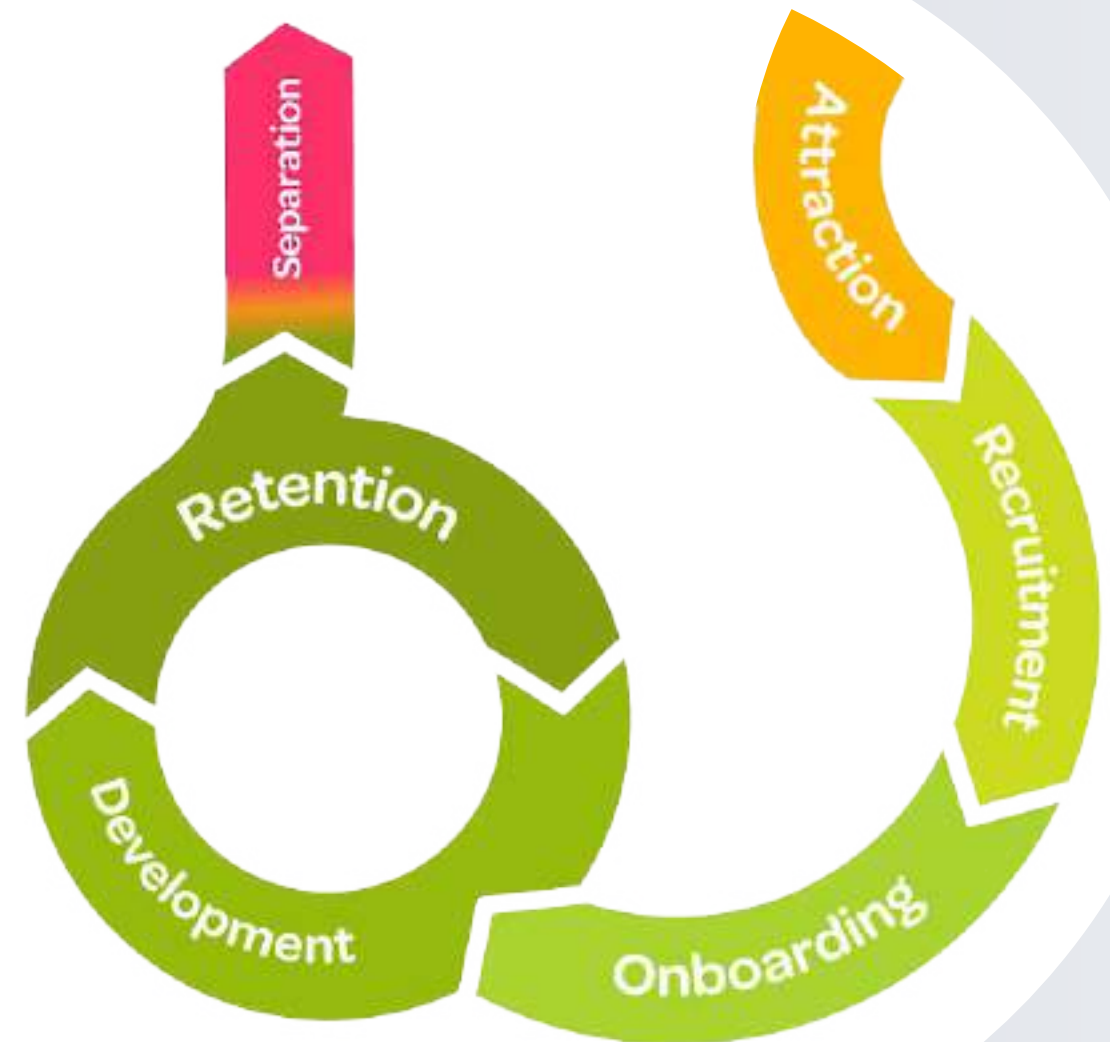
As an employer, being welcoming and inclusive of everyone matters - **at every stage of an employee's journey.**

That means we need to recognize and value diversity, **right from the start.**

This guide helps us to create a recruitment process that welcomes disabled and neurodivergent talent, and encourages success.

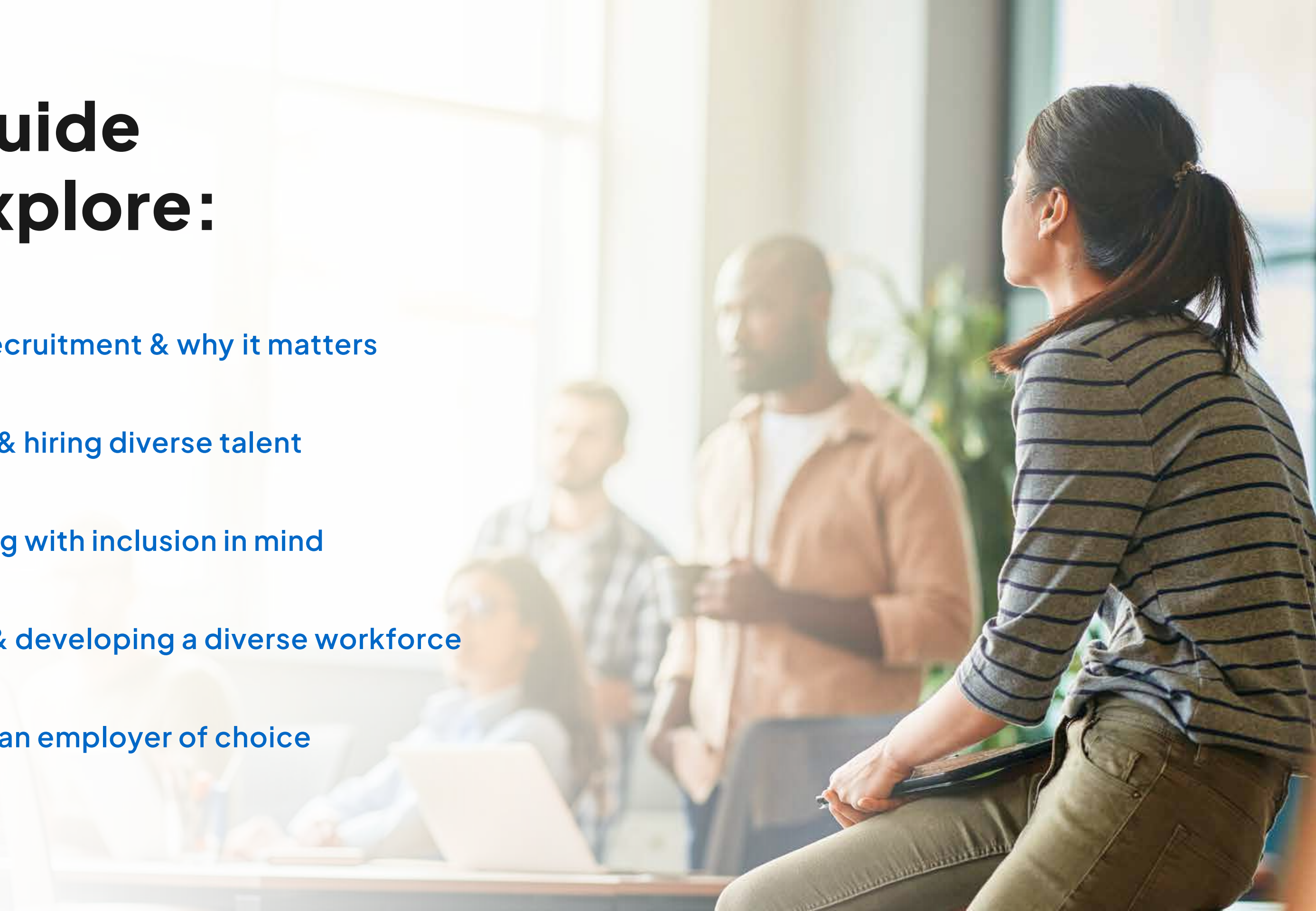
We'll explore how to create a culture where employees feel supported and encouraged to bring their best selves to work.

With expert insights along the way, we can help you become an employer of choice, for all.



This guide will explore:

1. [Inclusive recruitment & why it matters](#)
2. [Recruiting & hiring diverse talent](#)
3. [Onboarding with inclusion in mind](#)
4. [Retaining & developing a diverse workforce](#)
5. [Becoming an employer of choice](#)



Chapter 1

Inclusive recruitment & why it matters



What is inclusive recruitment?

Inclusive recruitment is a way of recruiting that recognizes, understands and values differences in every part of the process. From connecting with candidates, to interviewing, hiring and onboarding. It's accessible and inclusive to all people, flexible to different needs, and free from bias.



Why does inclusive recruitment matter?

Inclusive recruitment helps us to open up our companies, and attract candidates from all walks of life. This gives us access to a much wider talent pool, and that's important in our increasingly diverse world.

With an accessible and inclusive recruitment process in place, we can truly promote equal opportunities for everyone. A process where every candidate feels invited, understood and empowered to succeed. This enables us to recruit the best person for the job.

Not only that, disabled employees are often empathetic, tenacious and resilient. People with neurodifferences often think and behave in unique ways. With this comes out-of-the-box thinking, creative solutions and more. Inclusive recruitment allows us to benefit from a wealth of talent that's often forgotten. In fact companies that champion disability inclusion report 30% higher profit margins⁶ compared to their peers. Despite this, just 51% of disabled people of working age are employed.⁷ That compares to 81% of non-disabled people.

“ Together, we can change that.

15%¹
of the world's population
have a disability.
That's 1 in 7 people.

By 2050²
the number of people
living with a disability
is expected to double.

83%³
of those with disabilities
acquired their disability
during their working lives.

15-20%⁵
have a neurodifference
such as **Dyslexia, Autism**
and **ADHD**.

2.2 Billion⁴
have a near or distance
vision impairment

Chapter 2

Recruiting & hiring diverse talent



3 key areas of inclusive recruitment

01 ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE TO ALL PEOPLE

43% of neurodivergent people have felt discouraged from applying for job roles because of the application process.⁸

An accessible application process is one that can be accessed, understood and completed by all people, without barriers. An inclusive application process is one where all people feel welcomed and included. By looking at the language we use in our recruitment outlets, we can help improve the accessibility and inclusion of the process.

The Job Description

- **Write job descriptions focused on the specific skills related to the actual job role.** A lot of the time job specifications list that candidates must have 'excellent communication skills'. This alone could exclude a lot of people from applying. So we must ask ourselves, what skills are really needed for the role?
- **Make sure job specifications are outcomes focused.** Often, job descriptions specify how a job should be done. Instead, we should focus on finding someone who will give us the outcomes needed, even if it's done in a way we wouldn't expect.
- **Use language that's inclusive, and easy to understand.** Some job roles include words such as 'Guru' in the title of the position. This can put people off applying, because they may not have the confidence to think of themselves like that. Some job descriptions also use language that's hard to understand. For example, they include complicated words and jargon.
- **Choose a layout that's easy to read.** Some job descriptions use one block of text with small lettering, and small line spacing. This format can be inaccessible for people with Dyslexia, for example. We can improve readability by using an accessible font, making use of bullet lists, keeping sentences short, and choosing colors that have good contrast.





Diane Lightfoot

CEO, Business Disability Forum



Whenever there's a post to fill, the temptation to dig out the job description, give it a quick once over and then push it out again unchanged is very strong...**If you can take a step back and say - Do I really need 5 years' experience? A degree? A driving licence? Does it have to be full time?** Are there different ways that this job could be done, or different things that I could ask for, or not ask for, that might open it up to applications from people with different life experiences and different journeys?

The Advertising Platform

- **Choose accessible recruitment websites, such as those that meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).** Websites that are accessible to people with disabilities will comply with WCAG Level AA, at minimum. By advertising on an accessible website, all people, including those using screen readers, will be able to use the website.
- **Don't use automatic screening.** Some recruitment websites automatically screen out people who have a gap in their CV. This can disadvantage someone who hasn't had the same opportunities to access employment. Or has had to take time out of employment to adjust to a new way of living, such as those with acquired disabilities.
- **Make sure your social media adverts are accessible.** When advertising a new job role over social media, make use of accessibility features. For example, add text descriptions to your images as you post to Twitter or LinkedIn.





Kate Headley

Director, The Clear Company



If you're going to advertize, it's about what you say as much as where you put your adverts. You need to make sure that you're not inadvertently going on a jobs board that's inaccessible...There's some specialist job boards such as Evenbreak, which we know are fully accessible and we know have that diversity reach.

3 key areas of inclusive recruitment

02 FLEXIBLE TO DIFFERENT NEEDS

52% of neurodivergent people have experienced discrimination during interview or selection processes.⁹

An inclusive interview and selection process will recognize diversity, and be flexible to different needs. To improve, we must be willing to challenge the way things have always been done.

- **Encourage candidates to demonstrate their talents in different ways.** For many people, interviews can be overwhelming. This is especially true for people with neurodifferences, such as Autism, and leaves many people unable to showcase their talents. Rather than relying on a written CV and interview alone, allow candidates to share their talents and suitability for the job in other ways. For example, by submitting a video CV, a portfolio of existing work, or completing a work task or trial.
- **Provide candidates the opportunity to share their life circumstances, every step of the way.** To give all candidates a fair chance to show you how good they are, it's important to ask

candidates if they require any adjustments at each stage. But do so mindfully. Rather than asking for candidates to 'disclose' or 'declare' a disability, we can simply ask if there are any supports or adjustments they need to help make the process a more positive experience.

- **Communicate with the candidate in their preferred way.** As well as asking candidate's what support they need, we can ask how they prefer to be communicated with. For some, information is easier to process when it's written. For others, verbal is best.





Jane Hatton

CEO & Founder, Evenbreak

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For me, thinking about the recruitment process is looking at it through the lens of difference and people who have different needs. Organizations are now challenging the traditional recruitment process of CV's followed by interviews. CV's give you historical information about the privilege that somebody has had. So if you're disabled and you've been discriminated against, you won't have had the work opportunities that make your CV look good. Not because you don't have the talent, but because of discrimination. Interviews also show you how good people are at interviews, not how good they are at doing the job.

3 key areas of inclusive recruitment

03 FREE FROM BIAS

1 in 3 people show unconscious bias against people with disabilities (including neurodifferences).¹⁰

Such biases are often what is underneath the barriers that people face when they come to recruitment, interviews or applications. As an employer, it's important to be proactive about reducing bias, both systemically and at an individual level.

Reducing Systemic Bias

- **Create a disability inclusion and neurodiversity policy.** A lot of the advice given so far helps us to reduce systemic bias throughout recruitment. By putting policies in place, we can support hiring teams to follow best practice. Having policies can also help us to be more inclusive throughout all other stages of an employee's journey. It helps us to make sure that all employees are treated fairly, and have what they need to succeed.
- **Involve a diverse panel.** We can reduce bias further by making sure that selection and interview panels include a diverse panel. Including multiple people throughout the process helps to balance decisions. This is improved by making sure the panel is representative.





Kieran Thompson

Head of Talent, Cundall



When we think about bias, we're often drawn into discussions about individual judgments and decision-making. But it's also important to address systemic bias. That is, policies and processes that favor certain groups over others through a pattern of norms, expectations, and traditions. They're the kinds of biases that are baked into a company culture, and determine how we recruit and reward colleagues.

Reducing Individual Bias

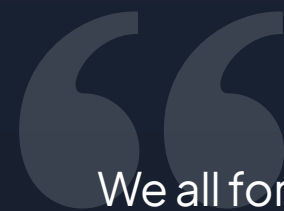
- **Educate staff. Debunk the myths.**
Negative attitudes and stigma around disability and neurodiversity exist. We should challenge misconceptions with training and storytelling. Raise awareness by sharing real experiences of disabled and neurodivergent people. Celebrate differences by sharing how talented people within these communities are.
- **Help staff to realize their own biases.**
Having open discussions about bias can help raise awareness that biases exist. By encouraging reflective thinking, with tests such as the [Harvard Bias Test](#), we can help staff to realize their own biases and become more aware of them.
- **Get involved with programs that help drive change.** Work with partners, such as [Project Search](#), which supports young people with disabilities to transition to work. Such programs offer individuals the chance to experience the workplace, and also helps to raise awareness around differences, and showcase what diverse talent looks like.





Anna Button

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist, Next Plc



We all form opinions about other people based on micro messages that we're all receptive to. And it doesn't matter who you are, how unbiased you think you are, you will form a bias...It's natural. It's part of who we are, as we try to fill the gaps on things we don't know the answers to. What's bad is when we don't reflect and start challenging those biases.

[Discover more](#)

Chapter 3

Onboarding with inclusion in mind



Tips to support inclusive onboarding

80% of all disabilities are invisible.¹¹ 76% of people with a disability or neurodiverse condition do not share this at work.¹²

An inclusive onboarding process helps our staff to feel included in their new workplace, and comfortable to be themselves. It also makes sure employees have what they need to succeed in their new role, right from day 1.

- **Consider accessibility of all onboarding materials.** Everyone understands in different ways. Some people may also have access needs. These can be visual, auditory, cognitive or physical. Providing onboarding materials in multiple formats, gives our employees choice in how they access and understand information.
- **Ask what you can do to support staff at work.** Give all employees the chance to open up and share their experiences with you. Doing so helps us to understand our people better, and creates the chance to offer personalized support.
- **Offer tools that allow all employees to achieve in their own way.** Demonstrate inclusivity by giving all staff tools that allow them to choose how they work - without them having to ask. For example, [inclusive technology](#) that allows staff to hear text read out loud, dictate information, and more.
- **Introduce a buddy system.** Joining a new company can be overwhelming for anyone. But for someone with a disability, or neurodifference, it can come with extra anxiety. This can be due to a fear of being seen as different, or a fear of asking for support. With a buddy system, all people can feel welcome, safe and secure.





Sainsburys

Colleague Engagement & Inclusion Executive

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We need to be proactively supporting our employees. Our approach is to put the colleague in the driving seat. They're the expert in their condition. By working with them to understand what they need, and what we can do to really unlock their capability, we can ensure they have a great experience. It's such a waste of talent when there's a minor barrier to capability, and it can be unlocked by the provision of some equipment or software, but then that's not procured for the colleague.

Chapter 4

Retaining & developing a diverse workforce



3 key areas for creating an inclusive culture

Our employees will thrive best in a place where they feel supported, valued and celebrated. That's why, alongside inclusive recruitment and onboarding, it's also important for us to build an inclusive company culture. This means a place that embraces differences, makes sure employees feel heard, and helps the entire workforce to feel connected.

An inclusive culture:

1. Begins with transparent leadership.

Transparent leadership means to lead with openness and honesty. By being transparent, employees are more likely to feel confident about being open and honest in return. It creates a culture that generates trust and engagement.





Crosby Cromwell

Chief Partnership Officer, The Valuable 500



Culture is everything in the workplace and workforce. Policies and practices sit on paper, but one of the strongest things you can do to start to change hearts and minds, as well as the business ecosystem, is really powerful storytelling. And we need our leaders to lead in that. We need our CEOs to step forward to illuminate their own personal stories, in what ways they're connected to disability and why inclusion matters to them.

Gain more advice from the Valuable 500 & partners in this recorded webinar.

[Watch it here](#)

3 key areas for creating an inclusive culture

2. Is carried on through your people.

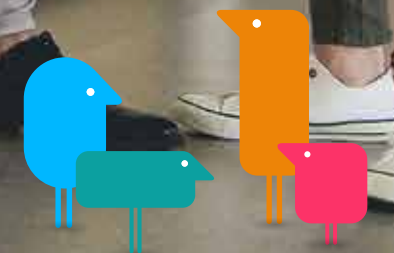
Part of building an inclusive company culture is making it everyone's responsibility. You may have a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) team, but they can't make cultural changes alone. As the saying goes, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."



"Often diversity is seen as being the responsibility of the D&I team...but actually it's the responsibility of every leader and manager to embed this into the everyday work they do. Something we've seen a number of companies do is to put key performance indicators related to inclusion in everybody's job descriptions and appraisals. That way, everybody has ownership and accountability of it within the context of their own job.

It becomes part of how the company functions rather than a separate initiative that may be forgotten."

- Jane Hatton, CEO & Founder, Evenbreak



3 key areas for creating an inclusive culture

3. Is supported by community initiatives.

Community initiatives, such as Employee Network Groups, help staff to feel heard, and secure in the workplace.

A good example is the Disability Network Group at IBM UK. It was developed by Alixandra Horton, Managing Consultant at IBM. Alix has a neurological condition, and started the group to connect-with and learn-from others with similar experiences:





Alix Horton

People with Disabilities Network Lead, IBM



Within the disability network group at IBM UK, we focus on 4 key areas:

Community. Creating a safe space so people can connect and talk to one another.

Education. Sharing personal stories, which is so incredibly powerful and helps make sure that managers are equipped to support their employees.

Accommodations. This is really focused on accessibility and adjustments that we can make, so no one has to struggle.

Representation. Making sure that disabled voices are heard by our leaders, and then holding them accountable for any actions.

Chapter 5

Becoming an employer of choice



Top tips for promoting your employer brand

76% of job seekers consider workplace diversity an important factor when considering employment opportunities.¹³

We should be proud of our work in improving inclusion in our workplaces. We should shout it from the rooftops and share that great work with external audiences. This helps us to demonstrate commitment to disability inclusion, and show prospective candidates that they can trust us.

- **Be transparent about how you support your employees.** Present information about inclusive practices on your careers page. Share the stories of diverse people. Hearing what we can all do to support employees, and seeing it in action, helps to show that we're proactive and trustworthy.
- **Go further. Be transparent about future goals and how far there is still to go.** Being inclusive is part of a continuous journey. There's always more we can do to improve. So don't be afraid to say it. Share what the future of D&I looks like for your company. Be honest about the challenges, as well as the successes.
- **Partner with organizations or schemes that can help to improve further. And advertize it.** There's lots of support out there to help us improve. For example, the [Business Disability Forum](#), the [Valuable 500](#), and the [Investors in People](#) accreditation. As well as government schemes such as the [Disability Confident Scheme](#) (UK). Get involved, and share that part of the journey too.





Nikki Goode

Texthelp Employee with an Acquired Brain Injury



What would make me apply for a job in terms of what would give me the confidence in going to an employer is that trust element... you know they're saying they're disability confident, but are they? What's that going to look like for me? How am I going to be supported? ...that to me is what's really important.

[Discover More](#)

About Texthelp

At Texthelp, we believe everyone deserves to understand and be understood. We create technology that helps people at work achieve more by making reading and writing easier. Our tools help organizations to communicate simply, clearly and accessibly too.



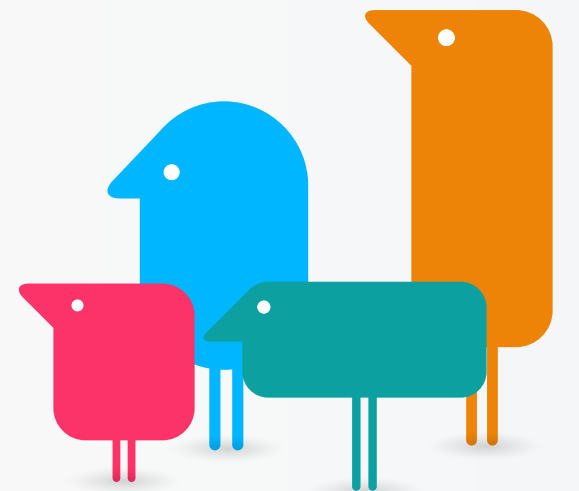
Our inclusive technology helps businesses attract, retain and nurture a diverse workforce.

[Discover Read&Write](#)



Our web accessibility software helps businesses to improve the accessibility, readability and reach of online content.

[Discover ReachDeck](#)





We hope you enjoyed this guide. Contact our inclusive technology experts for more information on how our technology can support disability inclusion and neurodiversity in the workplace.

[Get In Touch](#)

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