

Embedding Disability Inclusion As Business As Usual

Disability inclusion is a culture, not a tick box.

Disability inclusion works best when it's built into your team's daily work. It's not something to do occasionally or only when someone asks for an adjustment. When inclusive practice becomes part of your team culture, everybody benefits.

In this document, we'll look at simple but effective things your team can do to embed inclusion in daily work, whether you're a manager, an executive leader, or a team member. This is about how you work with people. Small actions, not constantly, lead to big results.

Start by shifting your mindset.

Inclusion starts with how we think.

Disability is not about what someone can't do; it's about the barriers that society and workplaces put in the way. Remove the barriers, and people thrive.

The social model of disability helps us see this. So instead of asking, "How do I help a disabled colleague fit into our team?" the question should be, "How do we make our team a place where disabled people can thrive?"

Ask questions.

Disability inclusion is not about being the expert. You just need to be curious and respectful.

Create spaces where people can share what they need to work well. But don't assume that somebody knows all the answers. Provide information to enable people to think about a situation.

- Provide people with information about what they must do and what is expected.
- Give examples of solutions that have worked well in the past or could work well.
- Collaborate on ideas.

Examples of what may work well could include:

- Provision, budget and resources to use AI tools for notetaking.
- Flexible start times.
- Assigned chairs in meetings, enabling easy access.

Normalise conversations about adjustments.

Adjustments needn't be formal or complicated. Often, the simplest adjustment makes the biggest impact.

Take a couple of minutes to consider what adjustments you implement for yourself without even thinking about it to make your work life easier. If you position your chair in a certain way to be more comfortable, you may go off into a corner breakout room to process documents.

The only difference is that you don't need to involve anyone else to make it happen. Often, a disabled colleague will not need to, but there will be situations where somebody will need support from a colleague or manager to make their adjustment work.

If we make adjustments a normal part of team life, not a special request, we remove the stigma around this.

As a team, you can start with:

- Talking as a group about how each person works best.
- Building flexibility into your daily processes.
- Review the systems and processes within your control and update to ensure accessibility.

Lead by example.

Whatever your role or your position in the organisation, you have the ability to lead by example.

Team capture is shaped by what people say and do every day. This means you have power. Whether you realise it or not! So start with what's in your control.

For example, you could:

- Use plain English and non-ambiguous language when sending emails.
- Give people the opportunity and time to respond. Don't put people on the spot for a fast response.
- Be honest when you don't know something, be open to learn from others.
- Challenge inaccessible processes and share ways that they could be made more inclusive.

These seemingly small steps build psychological safety. When you act with inclusion, others will follow.

Build inclusion into your teams processes.

Instead of waiting for someone to disclose a disability and then thinking about accessibility, proactively consider what people may need.

Asking the question: what would this process look like if somebody on our team had an access requirement? Can help you plan for the future.

For example,

- In meetings, share agendas in advance, take notes and offer captions or transcripts for online meetings.
- In recruiting, right clear, jargon free job ads, or alternative formats, ask about access requirements upfront and consider what is essential and what is nice to have.
- In onboarding, discuss adjustments on day one with everyone, not just those who ask or are visibly disabled.

By proactively demonstrating your inclusive processes, you will be providing space for people to feel confident that you are an organisation that cares about their experience.

This will make it more likely that people will disclose as a result.

There is a difference between telling and doing!

Providing space for lived experience.

Because disability isn't just a policy and process, it's personal.

If someone shares a lived experience, allow space for this to happen and listen. It may not be about finding any solution; it may just be about sharing.

If you can act, do so. This could be by being an ally or an advocate, changing a process, or simply listening.

You can also:

- Involve disabled colleagues in team processes.
- Share blogs or podcasts that centre disabled voices.

- Amplify voices in meetings and decision-making.

Inclusion isn't something you complete. It's something you practice.

Needs change and evolve. People change. What worked last year may need updating.

Stay curious, welcome feedback, and build a team culture where someone can openly say, "This isn't working for me" and be taken seriously.

What next?

Well, you're already well on your way as you read this article! If you would like to continue your journey and need some help, here are a few things to consider.

Choose one thing from the list to do this week:

1. Work with your team members to develop a checklist for inclusive meetings that everybody can follow.
2. The next time you organise an event, invite the registrar or participants to share their access requirements in advance.
3. Share this document with a colleague.

You may also find useful

[Measuring Manager Confidence in Disability Inclusion Training](#)

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