

# Improving Inclusive Recruitment



## Background

This information is based on the experience of the Somerset Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in recruiting Community Co-Researchers and working with the Lived Experience Advisory Partnership (LEAP) and the Community Organisation Advisory Partnership (COAP) members of the Breaking Barriers project.

## Aim

Make recruitment more inclusive by using simple, practical steps that ensure your hiring process is accessible, fair, and welcoming for everyone, including people with long-term health conditions and disabilities.

## Key recommendations

Consider signing up to the Disability Confident scheme, or if you are already a member, make sure this is stated on the job advertisement.

## Job advert

- Encourage applications from a diverse range of people and welcome informal enquiries.
- Make it clear that applicants are encouraged to apply even if they do not meet all the criteria.
- Provide clear contact details, including phone number and an email address.
- Respond to enquiries promptly.
- Where possible give advance notice of expected shortlisting and interview dates so applicants can plan ahead.

## Application form

- Encourage applicants to ask for any support or adjustments they may need during the recruitment process, reassuring them that this will not affect how their application is judged.
- Provide clear information on reasonable adjustments and any resources available to help applicants at the application stage.
- Offer more than one way to submit an application, such as online, by uploading a CV, or by post.
- Use inclusive language that recognises all types of employment status and work experience, including non-traditional pathways.
- Make sure questions are easy to understand and clearly state any requirements, such as word limits.

- Recognise that gaps in employment can happen for many different reasons, and allow applicants to explain them briefly or in more detail as they prefer. Do not make assumptions about their current employment status.
- Do not require applicants to disclose their current salary.
- Invite candidates to include any relevant life experience and show how the transferable skills they have gained, whether inside or outside formal employment, could benefit the role.

## Additional elements

- Consider accepting different types of referees, such as mentors or community leaders, not only past employers.
- Use sensitive and supportive wording when asking applicants about disability. Explain that they may be guaranteed an interview under the Equality Act if they meet the minimum criteria.
- Provide a simple explanation of what “disability” means under the Equality Act so applicants understand whether they might be eligible for reasonable adjustments. Resource links provided at the bottom of the page.

## Interview and selection

- Reaffirm the organisation’s commitment to being inclusive and ensuring fair access for all applicants.
- Offer a pre-interview questionnaire for all candidates regardless of disability to identify how best to support them during the interview (e.g. online or in-person interviews, camera off or questions on screen).

## Post-application

- Communicate respectfully and positively with applicants who are not successful, and offer constructive feedback where possible.
- At the job offer stage, provide space to discuss any adjustments the new starter may need, and create a “Working With Me” document as part of the onboarding process to support a smooth transition into the role.



### Links and resources:

**Breaking Barriers Report:** [www.hdrc-somerset.org.uk/background-to-breaking-barriers/](http://www.hdrc-somerset.org.uk/background-to-breaking-barriers/)

**Disability Confident scheme:** [www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign)

**Somerset Council Employment Hubs:** [www.somerset.gov.uk/community-employment-hubs/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/community-employment-hubs/)

**National Careers Service:** <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

**Indeed:** [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

**Step Up Somerset:** [www.stepupsomerset.org.uk/get-somerset-working/](http://www.stepupsomerset.org.uk/get-somerset-working/)