

# Inclusive Recruitment Guide for Employers

Practical recommendations for delivering an inclusive approach to the recruitment of students and graduates

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# Introduction

Inclusive recruitment means that your recruitment and selection processes are more likely to help you attract and employ people from a wider range of backgrounds and with a broader range of skills and characteristics.

Aiming to achieve a diverse workforce has a number of benefits, including:

- Access to a wider range of talent to help find the best candidates for your roles
- Reinforces a company culture that is diverse and inclusive which can improve staff retention
- Teams made up of people with different backgrounds and perspectives are likely to spur innovation, problem-solving and creative thinking
- More diverse teams can also better reflect your customer base and their needs
- Gaining insight from a range of perspectives reduces the risk of bias or group-think in decision making

An inclusive recruitment process also means that no one is excluded. Under the Equality Act 2010, there are nine protected characteristics - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. It is illegal to discriminate against someone based on any of these protected characteristics.

Your recruitment processes should be regularly reviewed to ensure you are not inadvertently deterring or discriminating against any candidates.

# Equality and Equity

The words equality and equity are often used interchangeably, but have different meanings. Equality means each individual or group is given the same resources or opportunities, whereas equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances, and allocates the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. Equity is a long-term, sustainable solution to address imbalanced social systems.



# Positive action vs positive discrimination

Positive discrimination is unlawfully treating someone more favourably based solely on their protected characteristics – for example, bypassing usual recruitment processes to offer a job to someone based on their ethnicity.

However, employers can take positive action through a range of measures allowed under the Equality Act 2010 to encourage and train people from under-represented groups, to help them overcome disadvantages in competing with other applicants.

There are a number of positive action measures that you can use in your recruitment processes to make them more equitable and inclusive. This guide presents some suggestions for each stage of the recruitment cycle.

### Inclusivity tip

Training and support for existing staff around equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) means everyone in the organisation understands and can contribute to an inclusive work environment

# 1. Advertising your role

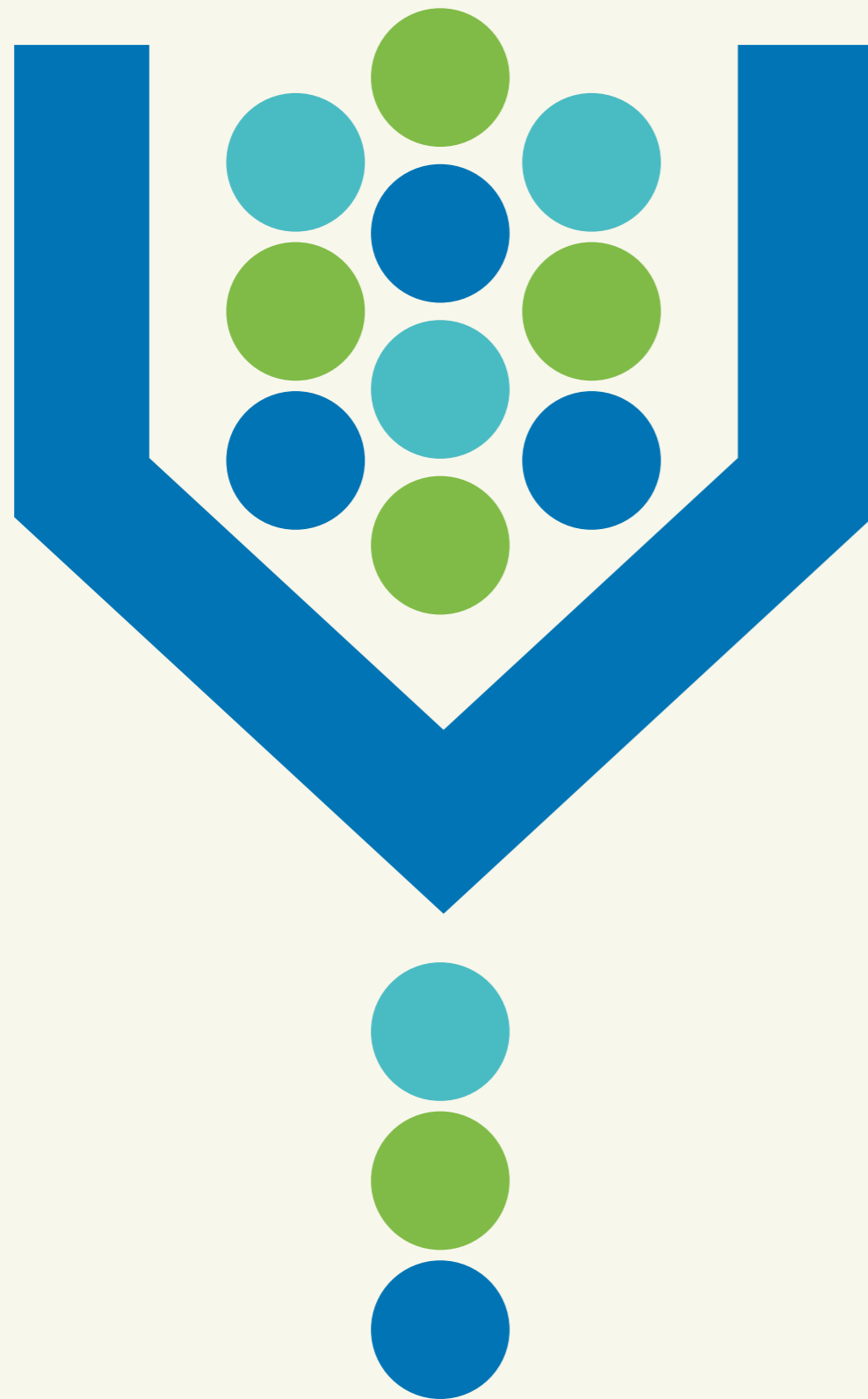
Consider the content and location of your vacancy adverts. The language, requirements, and platforms that you use may inadvertently exclude or deter some candidates.

To ensure inclusivity and attract a diverse range of candidates, here are some suggestions for improving job advertisements:

- **Gender-neutral language:** Avoid the use of gender-specific pronouns like “he” or “she”. Instead, focus on gender-neutral terms or rephrase the sentence to avoid pronouns altogether.
- **Concise and essential:** When listing job requirements, focus on what is truly necessary for the role. Avoid lengthy lists of qualifications or unnecessary experience expectations. If expertise is not a requirement, omit terms like “experienced” or “expert”.
- **Diversify advertising platforms:** Post job adverts in alternative geographical areas or on websites that cater to diverse communities. This approach expands the reach and visibility of the job opportunity, attracting candidates from various backgrounds.
- **Transferable skills:** Focus on transferable skills that are relevant to the position such as communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving. This encourages people with relevant skills but different employment or academic backgrounds to apply.
- **Named contact:** Include a named recruitment contact who applicants can speak to informally to find out more about the role and the working environment.
- **Representation:** Represent your existing workforce diversity at recruitment events. Representation of minority groups is one of the strongest ways to improve the diversity of applications.
- **Reasonable adjustments:** Advise that reasonable adjustments will be made where possible throughout the application and onboarding process to accommodate applicants’ needs and circumstances.
- **EDI Statement:** Include an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement in all of your adverts. You could also mention any diversity initiatives to support your statement. ACAS has created an example template of an EDI statement: [www.acas.org.uk/equality-policy-template](http://www.acas.org.uk/equality-policy-template)

By implementing these improvements, job adverts can become more inclusive, welcoming a diverse pool of candidates and promoting equal opportunities for all.





## 2. Shortlisting candidates for your role

Best practice is to only ask for essential information at each stage of the application process. Collecting more data encourages the sifting process to make biased judgements based on irrelevant information. The 'best' candidates may not even apply if there is a lengthy application form as it makes the opportunity less attractive, and harder to reach, and they may feel unfairly judged.

Some advertising platforms include required fields which cannot be removed. In this case, we recommend asking a colleague (not included in the recruitment decision) to collate the applications and remove any irrelevant information before passing them on to the hiring manager. This way decisions will be based only on the essential criteria for the role.

### Inclusivity Tip

Providing unconscious bias training will help you highlight and recognise where and how hiring decisions are influenced throughout your recruitment process.

### Essential Criteria

Skills

Experience (depending on the role)

Degree subject and grade

### Irrelevant Information

Name (replace with a candidate reference number)

Age

Gender (unless a genuine occupational requirement)

Ethnic background

Location

Names of school, college or university

# 3. Assessing candidates and interviewing for your role

It can be beneficial to consider the questions you ask during the application and interview process to ensure they are not discriminating against those who, for instance, are neurodivergent, or may not have had the same opportunities to gain prior work experience or employment.

You could reframe questions to focus on candidates' motivations, strengths or potential (strength-based questions) or skills and behaviours in situations (competency-based questions), for example:

- What are you good at?
- What interests you about this role?
- What energises you?
- How do you maintain good relationships with work colleagues?
- Describe a situation where you were asked to do something that you'd never attempted previously.

This will help to provide equity for applicants to be considered based on their attributes, skills, behaviours, and potential, rather than their experience.

### Inclusivity Tip

Consider using strength-based or competency-based interview questions depending on the role requirements.

### Interviews

When you invite candidates to interview, ensure that you provide clear information about the location and access to it. Ask all candidates if they have any access requirements or any reasonable adjustment requests. A reasonable adjustment is a modification of your process which will enable a candidate to perform in a way which minimises the impact of their disability.

Examples of adjustments you could make to your interview process include:

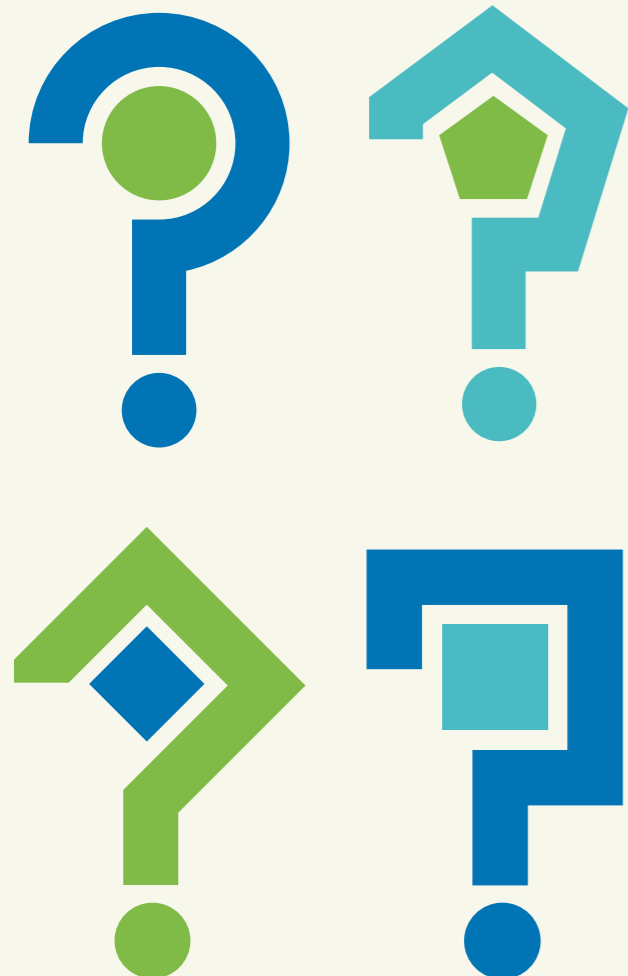
- Sending interview questions to candidates in advance
- Allowing time for "thinking pauses" to give candidates more time to respond to questions
- Allowing candidates to take notes during the interview if appropriate
- Adapting any technical tests you use at interview - for example allowing extra time to complete these
- Removing Situational Judgement Tests which are particularly ineffective for neurodivergent applicants
- Ensuring that you have a diverse range of interviewers on the panel

The above is not an exhaustive list - remember, adjustments need to be considered on a case by case basis.

### Assessment Methods

Some organisations might use different assessment methods as part of their interview and selection process, for example asking candidates to create a presentation or complete an example task. Adjustments can be made, such as:

- Allowing candidates extra time to complete tasks
- Providing longer break periods
- Supplying printed materials with large print text, or on coloured paper to make these easier to read
- Permitting the candidate to use their own equipment or software to complete tasks
- Offer advances for travel and accommodation expenses
- Using closed captioning, or allowing the candidate to turn off their camera at certain points during virtual assessment methods.



## 4. Reasonable adjustments for employees once hired

Once you have successfully recruited a candidate, it is in your interests to ensure that your new member of staff is well supported in their new role and work environment.

Induction is a good opportunity to discuss an individual's needs and to create an effective work environment for everyone in the team. Don't make assumptions about what's needed, as some people with disabilities might not need or want adjustments, although this might change over time.

Examples of reasonable adjustments employers can make include:

- **Physical workplace:** Adapting the layout of a work area or the entrance to a building or providing an accessible car parking space
- **Working arrangements:** Adjusting working patterns, distributing breaks more evenly across the day, flexible working (remote or hybrid)
- **Absence:** Allowing flexibility around appointments

- **Tasks:** Distributing work differently within a team, assigning different responsibilities or offering another suitable role, or training someone if they find classroom-based training difficult
- **Equipment:** Providing chairs, computer software and phones
- **Formats:** Providing emails and documents in more accessible formats, i.e. Use dark-coloured text on a light (not white) background
- **Specialist support:** Providing one-to-one or specialist support, for example, a sign language interpreter.

Employers are responsible for funding any reasonable adjustments, and many will be simple and affordable.

Employers will have different financial capabilities. If applicant or employee requests an adjustment, the employer may find after making enquiries that the cost would be damaging to their business, and the employer can turn down the request. However, they must make other workplace adjustments that are reasonable. For example, if fitting a lift to a building is not possible, the employer might make changes so the employee can do their job entirely on the ground floor.

Access to Work is a government scheme which helps people with physical or mental health conditions or a disability to get or stay in employment. This can help with reimbursement for things such as equipment, travel costs, or communication support like interpreting. See: [www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

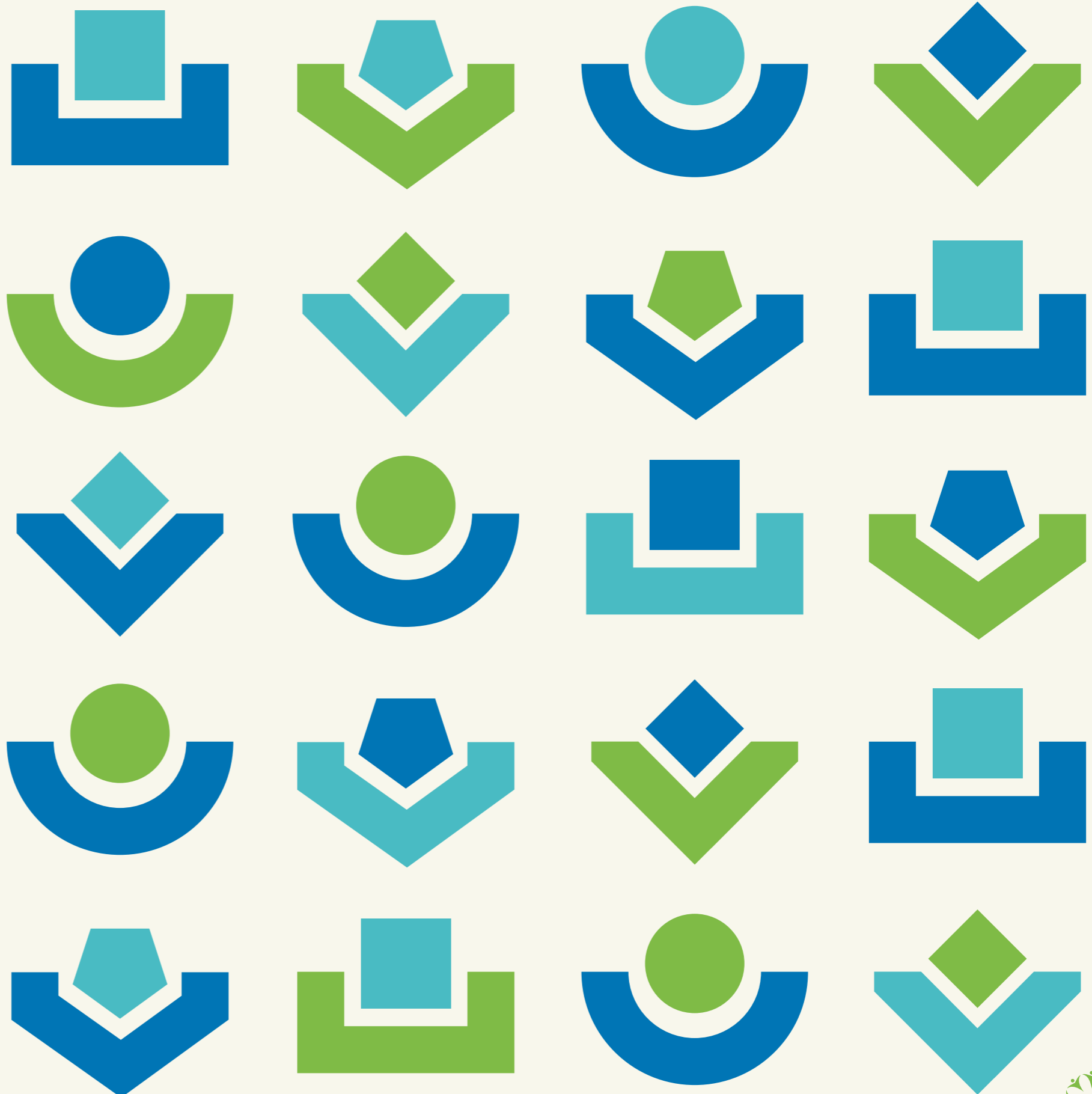
## Creating an inclusive workplace culture:

Ongoing diversity training: Implement mandatory training on subjects such as inclusion, harassment awareness, unconscious bias, relationship building, communication skills and cultural sensitivity.

Gender-neutral terms: Be sensitive and use gender-neutral terms, i.e. asking about a partner/spouse instead of husband/wife during conversations.

Transparency: Give applicants and employees a platform to give feedback and share their experiences.

Take action: Implement a bullying and harassment policy which covers all work-related activities (physical and virtual), including parties and socials. Record all complaints and take internal and external disciplinary steps where needed.





# Resources



UK Government	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination">gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers">gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers</a>
ACAS	<a href="https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments">acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments</a>
CIPD	<a href="https://www.cipd.org/uk">cipd.org/uk</a>
Equality and Human Rights Commission	<a href="https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/multipage-guide/employing-people-workplace-adjustments">equalityhumanrights.com/en/multipage-guide/employing-people-workplace-adjustments</a>
Institute of Student Employers (ISE)	<a href="https://www.ise.org.uk">ise.org.uk</a>
MyPlus Students' Club	<a href="https://www.myplusstudentsclub.com">myplusstudentsclub.com</a>
Diversity UK	<a href="https://www.diversityuk.org">diversityuk.org</a>
Diversiti UK	<a href="https://www.diversiti.uk">diversiti.uk</a>
British Dyslexia Association	<a href="https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk">bdadyslexia.org.uk</a>
National Autistic Society	<a href="https://www.autism.org.uk">autism.org.uk</a>
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)	<a href="https://www.rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses">rnib.org.uk/employers-and-businesses</a>
Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)	<a href="https://www.rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/support-for-businesses-and-organisations">rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/support-for-businesses-and-organisations</a>
Stonewall	<a href="https://www.stonewall.org.uk/power-inclusive-workplaces">stonewall.org.uk/power-inclusive-workplaces</a>
Scope	<a href="https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/reasonable-adjustments-at-work">scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/reasonable-adjustments-at-work</a>
Mind	<a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights/discrimination-in-everyday-life/reasonable-adjustments">mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights/discrimination-in-everyday-life/reasonable-adjustments</a>
Business Disability Forum	<a href="https://www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/">businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/</a>

# Institution Links

To discuss specific aspects of this guide, and/or to discuss recruiting a student or graduate please follow the link for your local institution.



**Leeds Arts University**

[leeds-art.ac.uk/business-industry](https://leeds-art.ac.uk/business-industry)

**Leeds Beckett University**

[leedsbeckett.ac.uk/business-services/work-with-our-students-and-graduates](https://leedsbeckett.ac.uk/business-services/work-with-our-students-and-graduates)

**Leeds Conservatoire**

[leedsconservatoire.ac.uk/about-us/progression-portal/employability-careers-further-study](https://leedsconservatoire.ac.uk/about-us/progression-portal/employability-careers-further-study)

**Leeds Trinity University**

[leedstrinity.ac.uk/business-and-employers/recruit-our-talent](https://leedstrinity.ac.uk/business-and-employers/recruit-our-talent)

**Sheffield Hallam University**

[shu.ac.uk/business/recruit-our-graduates](https://shu.ac.uk/business/recruit-our-graduates)

**University of Bradford**

[bradford.ac.uk/careers/business](https://bradford.ac.uk/careers/business)

**University of Huddersfield**

[staff.hud.ac.uk/careers/servicestobusinesses](https://staff.hud.ac.uk/careers/servicestobusinesses)

**University of Hull**

[hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/business/jobs-internships-industry-placements](https://hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/business/jobs-internships-industry-placements)

**University of Leeds**

[leeds.ac.uk/business-partnerships/doc/employ-students](https://leeds.ac.uk/business-partnerships/doc/employ-students)

**University of Sheffield**

[sheffield.ac.uk/careers/employers/sme](https://sheffield.ac.uk/careers/employers/sme)

**University of York**

[york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/careers/employers/sme-toolkit](https://york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/careers/employers/sme-toolkit)

**York St John University**

[yorks.ac.uk/business-support/work-with-our-students](https://yorks.ac.uk/business-support/work-with-our-students)



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