

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Employment Committee

Date of meeting: 12 September 2017

Subject: Disability Confident

Report by: Jon Bell - Director of HR, Legal and Performance

Wards affected: N/A

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to advise Employment Committee about the Disability Confident standard, and seek members' approval to request accreditation under the scheme.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- **Seek immediate accreditation to be a Disability Confident *Committed* Employer as described in the sections below**
- **Upon completing the required self-assessment, seek accreditation to be a Disability Confident Employer within the next 12 months**

3. Background

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) relaunched "Disability Confident" in summer 2016, an initiative originally launched in 2013 as a replacement for the previous "Two Ticks" positive action scheme.

Over 7 million people (17.5%) of working age in the UK are disabled or have a health condition. Disability Confident encompasses a number of voluntary commitments to encourage employers to recruit, retain and develop disabled staff and those with a health condition, such as offering work experience opportunities and implementing flexible recruitment processes. The scheme is intended to address the shortcomings of the previous Two Ticks initiative, which was criticised for not setting sufficiently rigorous standards for employers wishing to display the Two Ticks logo.



3.1 Aims and Objectives of Disability Confident

Through Disability Confident, the government is working with employers to:

- challenge attitudes towards disability
- increase understanding of disability
- remove barriers to work
- ensure that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations

It is not the government's intention to mandate the employment of individuals with a disability.

The potential benefits to the council from becoming a Disability Confident employer (as advocated by the promoters of the scheme) are:

- drawing from the widest possible pool of talent
- securing high quality staff who are skilled, loyal and hard working
- saving time and money on the costs of recruitment and training by reducing staff turnover
- keeping valuable skills and experience
- reducing the levels and costs of sickness absences
- improving employee morale and commitment by demonstrating that all employees are treated fairly

More significantly, by building a reputation as a Disability Confident employer that actively seeks out and hires skilled disabled people, the Council will be helping to positively change attitudes, behaviours and cultures, not just in the immediate organisation but in its networks, supply chains and communities.

Signing up to the Disability Confident scheme has no direct cost.

3.2 How to become a Disability Confident employer

The scheme has 3 levels that have been designed to support interested organisations in becoming Disability Confident. Employers must complete each level before moving on to the next.

3.2.1 Level 1: Disability Confident Committed Employer

To achieve this level, the council must:

- register its contact details

- sign up to the Disability Confident commitments
- identify at least one new thing that the council will do to make a difference for disabled people. This could include, for example, offering work placements or supporting disabled people into apprenticeships.

The Disability Confident commitments are:

- Ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- Communicate and promote vacancies openly
- Encourage applications from disabled people
- Support any existing employee who acquires a disability or long term health condition, enabling them to stay in work

Upon signing up, the council will be sent:

- a certificate in recognition of the achievement
- a badge to use on the council's website and other materials for 12 months
- a self-assessment to assist becoming a Disability Confident Employer

3.2.2 Level 2: Disability Confident Employer

To become a Disability Confident employer, the council must self-assess against a set of statements grouped into 2 themes:

- getting the right people for the business
- keeping and developing the people

The council will be able to get support with completing the self-assessment from existing Disability Confident Leaders, local disability organisations, Work Choice providers or network groups before submitting.

On submitting a satisfactory self-assessment, the council will be sent:

- a certificate in recognition of the achievement
- a badge to use on the website and other materials for 2 years
- information to help becoming a Disability Confident Leader

3.2.3 Level 3: Disability Confident Leader

The final level, Disability Confident Leader, aims to encourage employers to take the commitment further by championing the agenda amongst partners, suppliers and other organisations.

The amount of additional work associated with becoming a Disability Confident Leader is mainly activities related to externally promoting the scheme. Within the current and ongoing financial climate it is not felt appropriate to pursue this level at the present time.

4. Recruitment Issues

- 4.1 Members should note that, whilst Disability Confident encourages employers to go beyond their legal requirements, there is not a strict requirement to positively discriminate in favour of disabled people (which in any case is generally unlawful) or to guarantee an interview to disabled applicants (although many organisations do elect to do the latter where applicants meet the minimum requirements for a role).
- 4.2 The council recognises its duty to ensure that all recruitment and selection procedures are open, transparent and fair. All appointments are based on merit and in accordance with the Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy Statement.
- 4.3 Guidance from the DWP and existing Disability Confident Leader organisations indicates that the council should make applicants aware that it is a member of this scheme (e.g. by using the logo on recruitment materials). It should also be clear to candidates what additional help, support or adjustments are available to potential candidates with disabilities. It will also be important to continually review recruitment processes and policies to ensure that any barriers that disabled people may experience when applying for jobs are identified and, as far as possible, removed.

5. Other considerations

- 5.1 Members should note that the Council's Employment, Learning and Skills Service (at PCMI) will be required to demonstrate the Disability Confident accreditation as it will soon become a contractual expectation within the Welfare to Work industry. Should members not be minded to support the recommendations of this report, it will be necessary for the service to apply for accreditation independently of the rest of the council.
- 5.2 For reference, a sample list of local organisations in the region who have committed to Disability Confident is included in Appendix 1.

6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

A preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. A full equality impact assessment is not required as the recommendation has a positive impact for Disability groups, and does not have a negative impact on any of the remaining protected characteristics described in the Equality Act 2010.

7. Legal implications

Positive discrimination is generally unlawful in the UK. For example, an employer recruiting a person because he or she has a relevant protected characteristic rather than because he or she is the best candidate would be committing discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Otherwise there are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

8. Finance comments

There is no significant cashable saving resulting from introduction of Disability Confident. It can be expected that there will be additional employment costs associated with reasonable adjustments to the work station and equipment as well as the general workplace. Some of these may be subject to Access to Work funding.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Organisations in region with Disability Confident

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: