

HR Committee

22nd September 2016



Report of: Service Director HR & Workplace

Title: Disability Confident

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Richard Billingham

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Recommendation

That the Committee notes this report.

Summary

The report updates the Committee on the launch of the Government's Disability Confident scheme, which is due to replace the Disability Symbol ("Two Ticks") scheme from 1st July 2017.

The significant issues in the report are:

- The Disability Confident scheme will have three levels: Level 1 (Disability Confident Committed Employer), Level 2 (Disability Confident Employer) and Level 3 (Disability Confident Leader).
- The Council has been informed by the Department for Work and Pensions that as a current holder of the Disability Symbol ("two ticks") it will enter the Disability Confident scheme at Level 2. As a Disability Confident Employer the Council draws from the widest possible pool of talent and recruits and keeps staff who are skilled, loyal and hard-working.
- The Council intends to become a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3), which means that it will act as a champion within its local and business community, its supply chain and networks. It shows that the Council is serious about leading the way and helping other organisations to become Disability Confident.

Policy

1. The Council has held the Disability Symbol (“two ticks”) for many years. One of its commitments, for example, is to offer guaranteed interviews to disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a job.

Consultation

2. **Internal**
The Disabled Employees Group and Promoting Diversity Groups have been invited to comment on this report.
3. **External**
None.

Context

4. The Government is replacing the Disability Symbol (“two ticks”) scheme with a new initiative called the Disability Confident scheme. This is due to happen from 1st July 2017.
5. The Disability Confident scheme will have three levels: Level 1 (Disability Confident Committed Employer), Level 2 (Disability Confident Employer) and Level 3 (Disability Confident Leader).
6. The Council has been informed by the Department for Work and Pensions (which administers the Disability Symbol scheme) that as a current holder of the Disability Symbol (“two ticks”) it will enter the Disability Confident scheme at Level 2 – Disability Confident Employer. This means that the Council draws from the widest possible pool of talent and recruits and keeps staff who are skilled, loyal and hard-working.
7. Being a Disability Confident Employer requires the Council to self-assess against a set of statements, grouped into 2 themes. For each theme, the Council agrees to take all of the actions set out in the Core Actions list and at least one from the Activity list:
 - 7.1. Theme 1 – Getting the right people for your business – core actions
As a Disability Confident Employer my business is **doing all of the following**:
 - 7.1.1. Actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people
 - 7.1.2. Providing a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process
 - 7.1.3. Offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job
 - 7.1.4. Flexible when assessing people so disabled job applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job
 - 7.1.5. Making reasonable adjustments as required
 - 7.1.6. Encouraging our supplier and partner firms to be Disability Confident
 - 7.1.7. Ensuring employees have sufficient disability equality awareness
 - 7.2. Theme 1 – Getting the right people for your business - activity
As a Disability Confident Employer my business is **doing at least one of the following**:
 - 7.2.1. Providing work experience
 - 7.2.2. Providing work trials
 - 7.2.3. Providing paid employment (permanent or fixed term)

- 7.2.4. Providing apprenticeships
- 7.2.5. Providing a Traineeship
- 7.2.6. Providing paid internships or supported internships (or both)
- 7.2.7. Advertising vacancies and other opportunities through organisations and media aimed particularly at disabled people
- 7.2.8. Engaging with Jobcentre Plus, Work Choice providers or local disabled people's user led organisation to access support when required (or both)
- 7.2.9. Providing an environment that is inclusive and accessible for staff, clients and customers
- 7.2.10. Offering other innovative and effective approaches to encourage disabled people to apply for opportunities and supporting them when they do

7.3. Theme 2 – Keeping and developing your people – core actions

As a Disability Confident Employer my business is **doing all of the following:**

- 7.3.1. Promoting a Culture of being Disability Confident
- 7.3.2. Supporting employees to manage their disabilities or health conditions
- 7.3.3. Ensuring there are no barriers to the development and progression of disabled staff
- 7.3.4. Ensuring managers are aware of how they can support staff who are sick or absent from work
- 7.3.5. Valuing and listening to feedback from disabled staff
- 7.3.6. Reviewing this Disability Confident Employer self-assessment

7.4. Theme 2 – Keeping and developing your people – activity

As a Disability Confident Employer my business is **doing at least one of the following:**

- 7.4.1. Providing mentoring, coaching, buddying and other support networks for staff
- 7.4.2. Including disability awareness equality training in our induction process
- 7.4.3. Guiding staff to information and advice on mental health conditions
- 7.4.4. Providing occupational health services if required
- 7.4.5. Identifying and sharing good practices
- 7.4.6. Providing human resource managers with specific Disability Confident training

- 8. Certification as a Disability Confident Employer lasts for 2 years.
- 9. The Council intends to become a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3), which is a commitment to act as a champion within its local and business community, its supply chain and networks. It shows that the Council is serious about leading the way and helping other organisations to become Disability Confident.
- 10. To become a Disability Confidence Leader the Council needs to have its self-assessment validated from outside the organisation. The Government envisages that large businesses will pay for recognised accreditation, while small and medium businesses may use more informal methods, such as the involvement of an existing Disability Confident Leader organisation(s) or a Disabled People's organisation or a Disabled Person's User Led Organisation. As a large organisation, it is likely that the Council will seek to pay for recognised accreditation.
- 11. To attain Level 3 accreditation the Council will also need to be actively helping other employers make the journey to becoming Disability Confident, such as by:
 - Engaging with other local employers to encourage them and share the benefits of being Disability Confident

- Engaging with other employers in our sector, through sector bodies, networks, conferences, etc
- Encouraging other employers in our supply chain to start the Disability Confident journey
- Providing mentoring/peer support for other employers, locally or nationally
- Speaking about Disability Confident at business events and with local or national media
- Hosting or taking part in Disability Confident events and meetings

12. Certification as a Disability Confident Leader lasts for 3 years.

13. Further details of the criteria and process of the new scheme – including links to further information and guidance – are attached at Appendices A and B.

14. The Committee will receive further reports on progress.

Proposal

15. That the Committee notes this report.

Other Options Considered

16. Not to join the Disability Confident scheme. This is not recommended because as a large public sector organisation the Council has obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010 and is expected to show leadership on disability equality as both an employer and City leader. Not participating would do damage to the Council's reputation amongst staff and citizens.

Risk Assessment

17. The proposal to become a Disability Confident Leader is likely to be of low risk but will need to be appropriately prioritised and adequately resourced in order for it to be achieved within a reasonable time.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 12a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;

- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
- tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

12b) No equality impact assessment has been undertaken because this report is specifically aimed at improving the Council's standing as a Disability Confident Employer.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Advice not requested because this report is for information only.

Financial

(a) Revenue

Advice not requested because this report is for information only.

(b) Capital

Not applicable.

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Advice not requested because this report is for information only.

Appendices:

A – Disability Confident Leader – employer pack

B – Disability Confident Employer – employer pack

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.