
Summer Internships

A guide to help you with hiring disabled people
for summer internship roles



Over 21% of the
working age
population has
a disability

Introduction

This guide is designed to help you with hiring disabled people for summer internship roles.

It provides advice about recruitment, interviewing and induction that will help you ensure that becoming a summer intern is accessible for everyone, including disabled people.

Given that over 21% of the working age population has a disability, the pool of talented disabled people is large.

Using this guide will help you tap into all of the available talent and attract disabled candidates, so that you can recruit the best possible person for the job.

Recruitment

There are a number of aspects of recruitment that may be acting as barriers to you seeing and recruiting the best disabled and non-disabled candidates.

Job specification

The first step in any recruitment process is to understand what is required of the job. This information is then translated into a job specification.

Job descriptions and candidate specifications may needlessly exclude or discourage a high quality disabled candidate. Simple steps such as grouping criteria into ‘essential’ and ‘desirable’ and ensuring a focus on objectives rather than methods will allow all candidates to highlight their relevant skills and expertise.

This approach will allow applicants to talk about how they can complete the requirements of the job.

Advertising internships

All job advertisements should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that you do not exclude disabled candidates. The majority of disabled people prefer to apply for jobs through mainstream application routes. Employers should also positively encourage disabled applicants by specifically inviting them to apply. This could involve including statements like

“We welcome enquiries from everyone and value diversity in the workforce” and

“We are willing to consider flexible working arrangements” on the job advertisements.

On-line recruitment

On-line recruitment is an increasingly important channel for employers. Yet, the processes which many companies use may exclude disabled people.

Here are some tips on making your recruitment website accessible:

- Ensure that your website, as well as job boards and other websites are accessible.
- Frequently test the website for user accessibility.
- Include html email in online communication.

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- Create job alerts or job talent pools for unsuccessful candidates.
 - Images and non-text items should have text labels. People with vision impairment can use the site using screen reading software.
 - Have flexible automated scanning.
 - When users submit online applications make sure that sorting software such as spell checkers, does not discriminate.
 - Career pages should ideally include welcoming messages and demonstrate a commitment to employing disabled people.

Application form

When developing an application form, make sure that the information gathered determines whether the person can perform the job essentials and that the application form is available in alternative formats.

Good practice

Some practices that are useful:

- Both the person specification and job description should be reviewed each time they are used to make sure they are still relevant. This is critical in the rapidly changing global environment in which we live.
- No blanket requirements or exclusions in relation to health or disability.
- Qualifications should only be requested where there is a genuine occupational requirement.
- Don't be too specific about how a task should be complete.
- Criteria should be ranked in order of importance from essential to minor. Minor tasks could be reassigned to another person.

Examples:

- A job is advertising stating that a full driver's licence is required. The job entails visiting older people in the local area. Using a bus could achieve the same result.
- Some small wording change could produce the same result but also lead to a wider of pool of people being available – instead of using 'minimum typing speed' consider using 'produce quality documents using a word processing document.'
- Making coffee may be an additional task required of a receptionist rather than an essential task.

Interviewing

Arranging an interview

When arranging interviews, the best way to ensure that any adjustments are provided is to ask all candidates if they require an adjustment, when explaining the recruitment and selection process.

Where an applicant has said they have a disability, contact them as soon as possible to make arrangements such as an accessible room; car parking; hearing loop; interpreter. Briefing the receptionist and co-interviewers on the specific requirements of the person will help put them at ease.

Effective interviewing

See the fact sheet 'Interviewing disabled people' for excellent tips about effective interviewing. Often aptitude and other tests are included in the recruitment and selection process.

Ensure any assessments are in an accessible format and relate to the requirements of the job.

Avoid any questions you do not ask of a person without a disability.

Adjustments to tests may be reasonable, but this depends on how closely the test is related to the job and what adjustments you might have to make if the applicant was given the job.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments are:

- allowing extra time to complete test
- allowing an oral test where someone has difficulty with manual dexterity
- letting a reader or scribe help with reading or writing during a test.
- giving feedback to the applicants.

Whenever possible, employers should give feedback to unsuccessful applicants. This is particularly important where there have been discussions about reasonable accommodation. It must be made clear to disabled applicants that decisions are based on their level of skill or experience, not on disability related issues.

Induction into a new job

It is important for people to be properly inducted into their new job. Everything will be new and unexpected issues may arise. Any reasonable accommodation required during this phase should have been identified before the person starts to work with you.

Another staff member to support the new employee for a specified time may help build confidence making the entry into the new job much more successful.

Reasonable accommodations

Employers provide 'reasonable accommodations' to many employees, such as parents caring for young children or other relatives, staff with religious or ethical beliefs, as well as disabled people. Many of the adjustments made for disabled people are also needed by other employees, so adopting more flexible employment practices can help your entire workforce.

Steps to agreeing reasonable accommodations

- **Develop written policies on accommodations/flexible work practices** to ensure consistent decision making and document your efforts to provide accommodations. This will help all staff know what the guidelines are and how to request an accommodation.
- **What you provide all employees** is the starting point of any conversation with people around their needs.
- **Ask the person** before they start the job about what they would find useful. Workbridge and other organisations can provide expert advice.
- **Most accommodations are low or no cost.** Where there are associated costs, extra support may be available through the Job Support Fund including where people are getting work experience.
- **Provide the required accommodation/s** and check with the person that the accommodations are meeting their needs.
- **Talk with the employee regularly** to check if the accommodations are still meeting their needs, especially where the employee's needs change or there are changes to the workplace or the job.

If you have any other questions, check out the FAQs on the following pages that take through the recruitment process step by step.

FAQs

Topics	Questions	Recommendations
 Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the websites you are using accessible?• Have you engaged with employment placement agencies for disabled people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Run an accessibility check on the website you use• Look at sites such as www.possibility.net.nz• Engage with employment placement agencies for disabled people such as Workbridge or supported employment agencies.
 Job descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you prepare your job descriptions? Do you ask your manager to pin point the outcomes rather than the skills. i.e. do they really need a clean driving licence or do they need to get from one site to another in a timely fashion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look at alternative skills for a role.• Widen what a line manager asks for and explain to him/her why you are doing this.• Look at complimentary skills, particularly on those hard to fill roles.
 Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do candidates apply for your vacancies?• Have you set the essential skills too high, or not high enough?• Have you put a time limit on the application?• Do you have spell check in the free text boxes?• Have you provided a contact number and email address for candidates who are struggling with the application?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If your system is all on line you should provide telephone support to ensure the application is process barrier free.• Setting the essential skills low to attract more people doesn't work as you end up rejecting them and alienating them.• A time limit could be challenging for individuals with impairments like RSI or dyslexia.• If you use spell check in the office you must have it on the application form or this could be seen as discriminating.

Topics

Questions

Recommendations

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Interviews

- What is your interview process?
- How flexible can you be without compromising your processes?
- Do you always ask if adjustments are needed?
- Do you know who you need to go to to get the adjustments in place?
- Would you know what is reasonable?

- Ensure all outgoing communications talk about reasonable adjustments.
- Have a note, in each business area of who the “go to “ person is in each business area, for adjustments
- Have a process set up whereby adjustments at a certain level can be implemented without referral to a manager and clear guidelines on how to escalate.
- A member recently had a visually impaired candidate and wanted to put in adjustments; completely forgot to ask if they used a guide dog; a bowl of water and a place for the dog to walk was the only adjustment needed.

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Tests and Assessments

- What test and assessment do your candidates have to undertake as part of the recruitment process?
- Are you sure the assessments are accessible?
- Are the tests necessary and accessible?
- Are your assessors trained to be disability-smart?

- Ensure that your tests fit the job and determine whether they are necessary.
- Ask existing disabled staff to test them for accessibility

Topics

Questions

Recommendations

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Offering the job

- What information do you send when offering a job?
- Can you send in alternative formats?
- If you can use alternative formats do you know how to organize this?
- Have you added a clause to your contracts around assistive technology?

- Define a process that you go through when someone has told you about a disability.
 - If they need assistive technology can it be used with your current IT?
 - Have a process that means IT is included in the process to check if the technology is compatible
 - Ensure you have trained your line managers to know how to manage people with disability.
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Induction

- What processes do you have to ensure that your disabled employee can get up and working as soon as possible on site?
- Do you know about Job Support and other funds which Work and Income can provide to pay for the costs of adjustments?
- Has a PEEP (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan) been developed?
- Is the work space tailored for their needs?

- Any reasonable accommodations are agreed on.
 - When appropriate, Job Support has been applied for.
 - Disability responsiveness training is provided to the person's colleagues.
 - Facility orientation has been provided to people who are blind or visually impaired.
 - Check the induction is accessible and know who your "go to" person is for this.
 - If the person has a mobility impairment is their work station near toilet facilities?
 - Have you considered how someone in a wheelchair for example, would get through doors where they use a swipe card?
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Anne Hawker
Principal Disability Adviser
Ministry of Social Development
(04) 978 4142

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