



Disability Research Series **10**

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector



National Disability Authority
Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais

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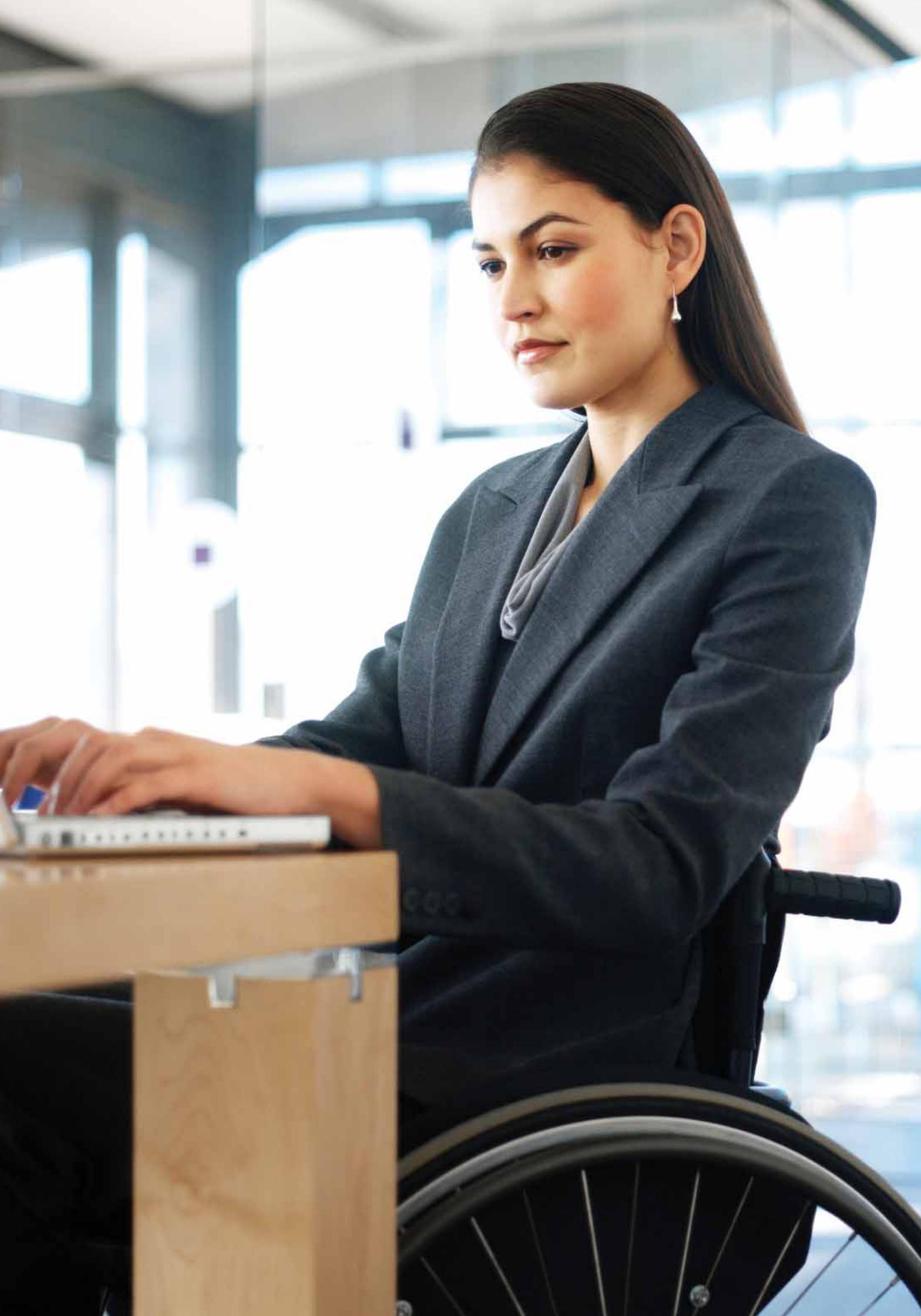
Contents

Executive summary	7
Section 1 – Employment context	17
Why organisations benefit from the representation of people with disabilities among their workforce	19
The dearth of research on disability in organisations	20
Summary	21
Section 2 – Becoming committed to recruiting and retaining staff with disabilities	23
Code of Practice	23
The importance of senior leadership	25
Setting and monitoring targets	27
The importance of explaining the rationale behind target-setting	28
The importance of a culture of confidence in disclosure	28
Key recommendations	29
Section 3 – Preparing the organisation	33
Addressing negative attitudes towards people with disabilities	33
Starting to create a culture of valuing disability diversity	34

A culture of flexibility and accommodation	36
Making the organisation attractive to people with disabilities	36
Key recommendations	39
Section 4 – Recruiting staff with disabilities	43
Approach to job analysis and person specification	44
Interview approaches	44
A culture of confidence in disclosure	46
Medical examinations	47
Partnership culture	47
Key recommendations	47
Section 5 – Induction, training and support for staff with disabilities	51
The importance of effective induction	51
Training issues	52
Providing recruits with disabilities with social support	53
Key recommendations	55
Section 6 – Leadership style and career development in the retention of staff with disabilities	57
The influence of line manager leadership style	57
The importance of a feedback culture	60
The importance of senior leadership style	61

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector

Leadership and relationship diversity	62
Career development culture	65
Performance management culture	70
A culture of ensuring accommodation for everyone	72
Key recommendations	73
Section 7 – Equality and diversity culture for the retention of staff with disabilities	77
A culture which values individual differences	77
A culture where adjustments are no big deal	79
A culture where non-traditional approaches are welcome	80
A culture of communication	81
A culture of inclusion	82
A culture of disability prevention and return-to-work	83
Key recommendations	85
Section 8 – References	89



Executive Summary

There are genuine reasons why having staff with disabilities makes good business sense for organisations, not least of which are the cost of ignoring a large talent pool and unnecessary employee turnover. However, it seems that too few organisations are aware of the business case, or know how to increase the number of staff with disabilities.

Communicating standards

Codes of Practice, policies and guidelines, if they are regarded as important, can have a powerful positive effect on the culture of an organisation and the experience of the employees. However, often overlooked, but equally as important as introducing a Code of Practice or policy, is the ownership of it by employees throughout the organisation. This can be derived by including staff in the development of documents, and effectively disseminating them throughout the organisation.

Research consistently finds that the most important indicator of the culture of an organisation is the leadership style of the most senior person in the organisation and his or her team. Senior organisational members act as powerful role models through their behaviour for what is and what is not acceptable behaviour within the organisation. A major reason for the frequent failure of culture

change attempts in organisations has been found to be the attitudes and behaviours of the most senior managers. These findings underline the key importance of senior managers being visibly committed to increasing the numbers of staff with disabilities in their organisation.

Effective target setting and monitoring are also key to success in increasing the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities. Therefore, it is important that organisations provide training in how to effectively set and monitor targets for managers at all levels, and they should provide clear leadership from one or more managers at the top of the organisation.

Preparing the organisation

Measures designed to increase employment equity, such as quotas and anti-discrimination legislation are not sufficient to address the barrier of negative attitudes that are frequently found towards the capabilities of people with disabilities. Research suggests that increasing contact with people with disabilities helps to reduce stereotypes and fears, and that knowing someone at work who has a disability is likely to lead to more inclusive attitudes towards disability and greater awareness of disability legislation. Therefore, organisations will benefit from a culture that is open to develop what may be new and innovative approaches to inclusion, such as work placements, work-shadowing and mentoring schemes.

Flexibility and accommodation are often essential to enable the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities, and have been found to benefit the organisation and staff as a whole. However, if they are not attributes of the culture of an organisation towards its staff in general, a lack of flexibility or accommodation cannot only block the ability for people with disabilities to work for the

organisation, but providing it could lead to resentment among non-disabled staff that “special provisions” are being made only to staff with disabilities.

The importance of a culture of confidence in disclosure

Research has found that, in many organisations, people feel intimidated about revealing their disability because of fears that they will be seen as less competent as a result. Therefore, it is essential, if targets are to be effectively monitored and reviewed, that the culture of the organisation is one which demonstrates that people with disabilities are regarded as competent and are genuinely valued in the workforce.

In order to achieve this, there needs to be disability awareness training for all staff which addresses the stereotypes that people hold of others with a disability, and which outlines why it is useful for an organisation to reflect this type of diversity. The training should be openly endorsed by the Chief Executive. It should be mandatory for staff to attend, particularly senior staff, and should become part of the induction for all new recruits in order to imbue it in the organisation’s culture.

Recruiting staff with disabilities

The recruitment of people with disabilities relies on the ability of the organisation to regularly reach people with disabilities in the community. This means that a policy should be introduced and monitored which states that vacant posts are advertised widely in line with best practice in accessibility.

It is increasingly argued that the nature of job analysis has changed since jobs themselves are no longer necessarily clusters of similar tasks, but often collections of activities and that selection should focus more on what people *could* do rather than what they can demonstrate having done in the past. Given that people with disabilities tend to have had less opportunity than non-disabled candidates to demonstrate their capability through a clear job history, it seems that such an approach to recruitment and selection, as well as benefiting the organisation as a whole, would increase the chances of recruiting people with disabilities, and thus enabling them to harness their capabilities in a meaningful way.

Research in selection and assessment consistently shows that the interview stage of recruitment is a major source of potential bias and discrimination. Therefore, it is essential that public bodies have a culture of strict adherence to best practice in fairness at this stage. For example, competency-based interviewing is often suggested as a key way in which to minimise bias, and yet research suggests that this method alone does not differentiate between organisations that are successful in recruiting staff with disabilities and those which are not.

One crucial issue that needs to be addressed is the control of bias in the interviewers' expectations of the candidate. Everyone involved in the recruitment and selection process should be trained in disability awareness. An open mind is required as to the characteristics of the best person for the job, as well as an appreciation that optimal performers achieve outcomes in different ways. Additionally, the presence of a well-trained chair of any assessment panel can help ensure that best practice is exercised by assessors at all times.

The importance of effective induction, training and support

Induction programmes have a strong influence on the intentions of an employee to remain with or to leave an organisation, and research suggests that people with disabilities may often leave their job at an early stage because of a poor induction. In common with all other aspects of the employment process, the culture of the organisation should be one in which careful consideration is given to the suitability of the induction process for the particular job incumbent.

Within the role itself, training and development opportunities have been found to have strong links with career satisfaction. Yet employees with disabilities often have less opportunities of this type than non-disabled employees. Key implications are that the culture of the organisation must be one in which the training and development of staff is regarded as crucially important, and should be regularly reviewed, monitored and lessons learned with respect to all staff. Additionally, it is one of the prime responsibilities of all of the leaders in the organisations to monitor whether line managers regularly assess any accommodations appropriate for their staff, as well as their individual training and development needs, providing solutions in a timely manner.

For all employees, being provided with a 'buddy' or a mentor, or being a member of a specialist network group can have very beneficial effects on their integration into the organisation, as well as provide a key social support for them to help them to adjust to their new role. What all of these social supports rely on, however, is a culture in which they are encouraged and supported, and a leadership approach which perpetuates them.

The influence of leadership style

Research finds that the single most important positive leadership factor in organisations is whether the leader shows genuine concern for their staff. This has been found to be the leadership factor most strongly associated with staff motivation, commitment, satisfaction and reduced stress. In turn, these outcomes have been demonstrated as being linked to significantly increased organisational productivity and performance.

In practice, this describes a manager displaying individual-focused behaviours and attitudes such as showing genuine interest in staff as individuals, trying to see the world through their eyes, showing that they value their contribution, developing their strengths through coaching and mentoring, and having positive expectations of what their staff can achieve.

Equally important in leadership is that a manager is able to adapt their style to what is most appropriate at the time with each individual. Focusing on the needs of an individual without sufficient focus on the basics of managing performance, such as clarifying and setting objectives, providing honest performance feedback and being directive rather than consultative when it is appropriate, can lead to poor performance and be negative for an employee and the organisation.

It is imperative that leaders accept that it is their responsibility to develop greater effectiveness beginning with increased self-awareness about their leadership style and the impact it has on others. Public bodies need to ensure that their most senior managers demonstrate their commitment to develop, and help others develop, in the same way.

Career development culture

Crucial to the retention of staff is their perception of whether they will be able to develop within an organisation in a way that meets their aspirations. Unfortunately, research seems to suggest that people with disabilities who would like to progress their careers are often not given the same opportunity as the non-disabled.

Performance management culture

A robust performance management culture is very important for organisations to thrive. This should include regular, formal reviews of staff performance, and informal opportunities when line managers offer staff both positive and constructive, critical feedback. However, discussions about performance are key events during which line managers need to be aware of the possibility of unconscious discrimination due to attribution theory.

A culture of ensuring accommodation for everyone

Research has found that the culture of organisations in which staff with disabilities were working in a positive environment and making a valued contribution were those where adjustments were regarded as “no big deal”. These employers adopted the approach of making regular adjustments for non-disabled staff on the basis of whether they increase efficiency, make good business sense, and help to retain valued employees. Any adjustments made for staff with disabilities were no different in approach.

What all public bodies can do is to encourage, through training and leadership role-modelling, a culture in which it is usual practice to ask people if there is any way that their work routine, activities or workspace can be made more efficient for them.

A culture of inclusion

Researchers in organisations often refer to a concept known as “corridor politics”, which is the tendency for staff who are in the ‘in-group’ to have many important meetings and discussions informally around and outside of the workplace, to which the other staff (who are thus regarded as in the ‘out-group’) are not privy. Out-group membership in an organisation means not only that a person is less likely to hear about important activities and take part in many decisions that may affect them, but it has also been found to be linked to significantly lower career satisfaction among managers with disabilities.

There are a number of steps that organisations can take to reduce the effects of in-group/out-group status which are important for public bodies to consider if they wish to retain staff with disabilities. The starting point is to move towards creating a more inclusive culture through awareness training of staff at all levels about issues, such as personal barriers, that may be between them and staff with disabilities (or vice versa), valuing individual difference and being inclusive in their activities, language and topics of conversation.

A culture of disability prevention and return-to-work

Research has demonstrated that employee turnover due to disability is an often avoidable waste of skill and experience, and the cost of replacing an experienced employee can be many times their annual salary. A culture which emphasises the importance of rehabilitation can make a significant difference to retention rates in acquired disability. It is suggested that an

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector

organisation's policy on return-to-work should be further embedded in the culture of the organisation and in the expectation of the workforce through it being addressed in all employees' inductions.



Section 1

Employment context

Statistics show that people with disabilities are two-and-a-half times less likely to be employed than those who are non-disabled (National Disability Authority (NDA), 2005a). Furthermore, according to 'Quarterly National Household Survey' data published in 2004, 18% of people with disabilities in employment are self-employed rather than employed by an organisation, and over 75% of the self-employed people with disabilities are working alone (cited in NDA, 2006). The unemployment figures are particularly striking for people with mental health problems. In the UK, where the employment situation for people with disabilities is similar to Ireland, data suggest that 76% of people with mental health problems are unemployed (Seebohm and Grove, 2006).

A 3% target for the representation of employees with disabilities in public bodies has been Government policy since 1977. The achievement of this target was overseen by the 3% Monitoring Committee, chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. However, research suggested that public bodies in Ireland as a whole were not achieving this figure (e.g. Conroy and Fanagan, 2001; Murphy, Drew, Humphreys, Leigh-Doyle, O'Riordan and Redmond, 2002). The 2005 Disability Act put this employment target on a legal basis for the first time. The 3% target is a positive action measure under the Disability Act 2005 aimed at supporting the employment and career development of people with disabilities in the public sector. All public bodies are legally obliged to report

on the number of people with disabilities working for them. The private sector has not been particularly successful in this regard, with a recent survey suggesting that only one in eight employers had one or more staff with disabilities (Manpower, 2003, cited in NDA, 2006).

Based on this data, an easy assumption to make might be to suggest that the lack of representation of people with disabilities is due in some way to the nature of disability possibly making it harder for people who have disabilities to be capable of being employed. Indeed, there are some prevalent and negative stereotypes among employers in organisations as to the capabilities of people with disabilities on the whole (e.g. Jackson, Furnham and Willen, 2000). However, a recent report by the NDA describes statistics showing that even people with a disability who do not put themselves in the category of “difficulty in working” have a significantly lower employment rate than their non-disabled peers (NDA, 2005a).

Among those people with disabilities who are employed by organisations, including the public sector, data shows that they tend to be concentrated in lower staff levels (Massie, 2006; Murphy et al, 2002). This not only means that they are not truly represented, but research consistently shows that, in order for organisations to benefit from diversity, people who have disabilities need to be found at all levels, including the most senior and policy making positions (e.g. Henderson, 1994).

Furthermore, research on the subject has found that, overall, employees with disabilities tend to be significantly less satisfied with their careers than their non-disabled colleagues (Hirst, Thornton, Dearey and Maynard Campbell, 2004). Alban-Metcalf (2004a) found that managers with disabilities who worked in the

UK public sector were significantly less satisfied than non-disabled managers with:

- progress they have made towards their overall career goals,
- success they have achieved in their career,
- progress they have made towards their goals for advancement.

Why organisations benefit from the representation of people with disabilities among their workforce

There are genuine reasons why having staff with disabilities makes good business sense for organisations. This business case is based on a number of general premises:

- Recruiting and retaining only non-disabled people means restricting the talent pool available to an organisation,
- People with disabilities have a great many skills that are not necessarily distributed as widely among the general population, and having experience of having a disability can increase creativity and problem-solving skills within an organisation and brings a whole other set of life experiences,
- Organisations need to mirror those they serve in order to provide the best service,
- Many people acquire disabilities during their working lives and thus organisations can avoid the substantial cost of losing talent and skills by retaining/redeploying them,
- The ageing workforce is likely to include many more people with disabilities in future.

However, the bottom line seems to be that, in a great many cases, organisations seem not to be aware of the business case for having a workforce that is representative in terms of disability. Its importance is not realised by and espoused by the leaders of organisations and is, therefore, not a feature of organisations' culture.

In some cases, organisations may be aware of the business case for increased representation, but not know how to achieve it; similarly, there may be a legal requirement to increase representation.

Another common situation seems to be that people within organisations feel that since their intentions are good in regard to employing people with disabilities, therefore, their actions must be effective (e.g. Griffin, 2006). Thus, they feel that they will naturally attract, recruit and retain people with disabilities, and so no further action needs to be taken.

In fact, for organisations (including public bodies) to recruit and retain people with disabilities, there are a number of key factors within the culture of the organisation, and in the leadership style at senior, middle, and supervisory manager levels, that need to be fit for purpose. Furthermore, as this report will demonstrate, all of the key factors would also benefit the workforce as a whole.

The dearth of research on disability in organisations

A consistent finding of reports on the issue of employees with disabilities is that, relative to other equality and diversity issues, there is very little research on the subject either in Ireland or worldwide (Alban-Metcalf, 2004a; Hirst et al, 2004; Kitchin, Shirlow and Shuttleworth, 1998; Murphy et al, 2002).

This report is based on a literature review of findings that have been published specifically on the subject of disability in employment, as well as relevant, good quality published literature on closely related subjects that can help to complete the picture as to how Irish public bodies can enhance their leadership and organisational culture in order to increase the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities.

Summary

Research finds that:

- People with disabilities are significantly less likely to be employed by organisations than non-disabled people,
- People with disabilities are likely to be at a lower level in the organisation than non-disabled people, and less satisfied with their careers,
- Organisations are often not aware of the strong business case for employing more people with disabilities, or how to recruit them,
- There is insufficient research on the subject of effective strategies in promoting the employment and retention of people with disabilities.



Section 2

Becoming committed to recruiting and retaining staff with disabilities

Code of Practice

In previous years, the Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the 3% Employment Target in the Public Service – chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform – agreed an outline Code of Practice and asked that all public bodies develop a Code of Practice suitable to their needs. Section 50 of the Disability Act 2005 allows a Minister of the Government to request that a Code of Practice in respect of employment in the public service be drawn up by the NDA. This is to be done in consultation with the relevant Minister and the Monitoring Committee in his or her Department established under section 48 of the Act.

Such Codes of Practice, if they are regarded as important, can have a powerful effect on the culture of an organisation, and therefore the experience of the employees. Research on formal policies on equality suggests that they are related to lower levels of work stress, higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and perceptions of fairness in career development (O’Connell and Russell, 2005) and have been found to be a key factor in organisations that are most successful in attracting employees with disabilities (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 2003).

Research by Murphy et al (2002) found that civil servants with disabilities in Ireland felt that having an active policy on equality would help increase their representation at more senior levels. A report of a large-scale project to increase the representation of staff with mental health problems in the NHS in the UK found that a crucial success factor was that organisations had an appropriate Charter in place (Seebohm and Grove, 2006).

Equally as important as introducing a Code of Practice or Charter is the ownership of it by employees throughout the organisation. Ownership can be increased by producing the document with the involvement of employees at different levels, and then disseminating it throughout the organisation.

Research by Watson, Owen, Aubrey and Ellis (1996) found that, in reality, many formal statements on equality and diversity have not been developed with the input of staff other than those at the Head Office, and thus appeared not to have any particular impetus or relevance for organisations' employees as a whole. Conversely, best practice is when such statements are designed with the input of staff and Unions, and endorsed by them (Workway, 2007). Furthermore, research across public bodies in Ireland and the UK has found that often Codes of Practice have not been circulated even to managers across the organisation (Murphy et al, 2002).

Without the involvement of employees in the development of equality policies, etc., which stipulate from a practical point of view what the key issues are and how they should be addressed, it will be much harder for organisations to incorporate the actions and behaviours described in the document into the organisation's culture. It is also crucial that the document is disseminated throughout the organisation, to send the message that the organisation is committed to increasing the representation of staff with disabilities.

The importance of senior leadership

Research consistently finds that the most important indicator of the culture of an organisation is the leadership style of the most senior person in the organisation and his or her team (e.g. Schein, 1985, 1990). Furthermore, whether they intend to or not, senior organisational members act as powerful role models, through their behaviour, for what is and what is not acceptable behaviour within the organisation (e.g. Bass, 1998; Bass and Avolio, 1993).

Thus, it is not surprising that research suggests that crucial success factors in the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities are the interest and commitment of the Chief Executive, their senior team and others at the top of the organisation (Conroy and Fanagan, 2001; DfEE, 2003; Henderson, 1994).

This is in contrast to the common finding that organisations believe that equality and diversity can be led from the HR department. Rather, it is strongly suggested that issues like this have a far greater impact if they become the responsibility of the entire Board of Directors (e.g. Lorbiecki, 2001).

Another reason why joint, high level responsibility is so crucial is that increasing the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities will often require a shift in culture and leadership style throughout the organisation. Research has found that a serious impediment to the success of culture change attempts in organisations is often the attitudes and behaviours of the most senior managers who do not believe that they themselves have leadership development needs (Alimo-Metcalfe, Ford, Harding and Lawler, 2001), highlighting the crucial need for this group to be engaged with the initiative.

Senior leaders may find it useful to put together a Steering Group to support the disability equality initiatives and help to improve their success. This should be made up of key people who can drive it forward. A research report on work to increase the representation of staff with mental health problems (Seebohm and Grove, 2006) suggests that such a group should include:

- Director of Human Resources,
- Occupational Health Manager,
- Trade Union representative,
- ‘Champions’ of the initiative from across the organisation.

Additionally, an annual forum should be held which shares ideas, addresses specific problems, and “ensures a progressive and evolving response to the particular needs of civil servants [or other employees] who are disabled” (Murphy et al, 2002, p164).

This forum needs to be attended by senior managers, and recommendations that arise from the forum and Steering Group should be fed back to the Board in a timely manner for consideration and action.

Under section 48 of the Disability Act 2005, Monitoring Committees are to be set up to monitor compliance with the provisions set out in Part 5 of the Act. Each Committee shall consist of not less than five members of whom:

- a) at least one is an officer of the relevant Minister,
- b) one is representative of persons with disabilities and who may be a member of the staff of a public body,
- c) one is representative of public bodies as employers or of employers generally, and

- d) one is representative of employees of the public bodies concerned or of employees generally.

Setting and monitoring targets

An important message that has come from studies of organisations for decades is that what is measured gets done, and what is not measured is usually not regarded as a priority (e.g. Jones, 1986). The Disability Act 2005 provides that each public body shall ensure that it reaches any prescribed compliance targets. Section 47(4) sets the minimum target at 3%. In achieving this, organisations need to realise that they cannot be effective without having a culture of target setting, monitoring and reviews of performance.

There are more and less effective ways of setting targets and monitoring performance. Monitoring that is too close and restrictive, or that which comes with severe punishments for missing targets, can be very bad for morale. It can also lead to individuals being tempted to break the law, for example, through covert positive discrimination. At the same time, a lack of target setting, or monitoring that is too loose, is not effective either. It is important that organisations provide training in how to effectively set and monitor targets for managers at all levels.

Additionally, in order for those responsible for driving forward any necessary changes to be effective in that aim, they need the clear and direct support of one or more of the most senior managers in the organisation. In other words, there needs to be clear leadership from one or more managers at the top of the organisation in order for this kind of major target to be achieved.

What this leadership offers the initiative is a strong sense of commitment and a clear line of responsibility, communication, and

influence to the Board of Directors, and appropriate ownership of the targets and activities.

The importance of explaining the rationale behind target setting

Another issue in the setting and achieving of targets is that of increasing staff understanding of why the targets are important. Research suggests that, in particular, human resources and occupational health departments need to understand and be engaged with the process as they will probably have most input into achieving the target (Seebohm and Grove, 2006). Ideally, through increasing staff awareness across the organisation, and through leaders demonstrating the importance of a diverse workforce, the reasons for the targets and actions put in place will be understood.

Bold actions may well be required, such as special competitions to initially boost the representation of people with disabilities in specific posts, as have been used with some success in the Civil Service (Murphy et al, 2002). Requiring contractors who are bidding for government contracts to also have targets for monitoring equality and diversity also sends out a powerful message to staff and the general public about the commitment of an organisation to this issue.

The importance of a culture of confidence in disclosure

Research has found that in many organisations, people feel intimidated about revealing their disability because of fears that they will be seen as less competent as a result (e.g. Hirst et al, 2004; Kim, 2006; Murphy et al, 2002). However, if people do not feel comfortable disclosing that they have a disability, targets cannot be

accurately monitored or reviewed. Therefore, it is essential that, from the outset, the culture of the organisation is one which demonstrates that people with disabilities are regarded as competent and are genuinely valued in the workforce.

Research in the Irish Civil Service found that, in many Departments, personnel officers admitted that not only did many Departments not know whether there were accurate data held on staff with a disability, but also that in only seven Departments could the personnel officers assert that staff with disabilities knew that they are recorded in this way (Murphy et al, 2002).

In order to create perceptions within the culture of a public body that people with disabilities are welcome and are regarded as having an important contribution to make to the organisation, there needs to be disability awareness training for all staff which addresses the stereotypes that people hold of others with a disability, and outlines why it is useful for an organisation to reflect this type of diversity. There also needs to be a zero-tolerance policy and attitude within the organisation towards disability discrimination. In addition, it should be made clear that any data gathered on persons with disabilities – as a result of complying with the employment target – should be treated with the strictest confidentiality and used only for beneficent purposes.

Key recommendations

Making equality a priority:

- Agencies should formulate a comprehensive policy, setting out their commitment to the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities,

- Staff and Union representatives should be involved in the formulation of the document and it should be endorsed by them,
- The Chief Executive and Board of Directors of an organisation should be responsible for equality and diversity across the organisation,
- A Steering Group should be put together to drive forward disability equality and diversity,
- Within each organisation, an annual forum should be held which is attended by senior managers in which employees with disabilities and the Steering Group make practical recommendations for improving the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities.

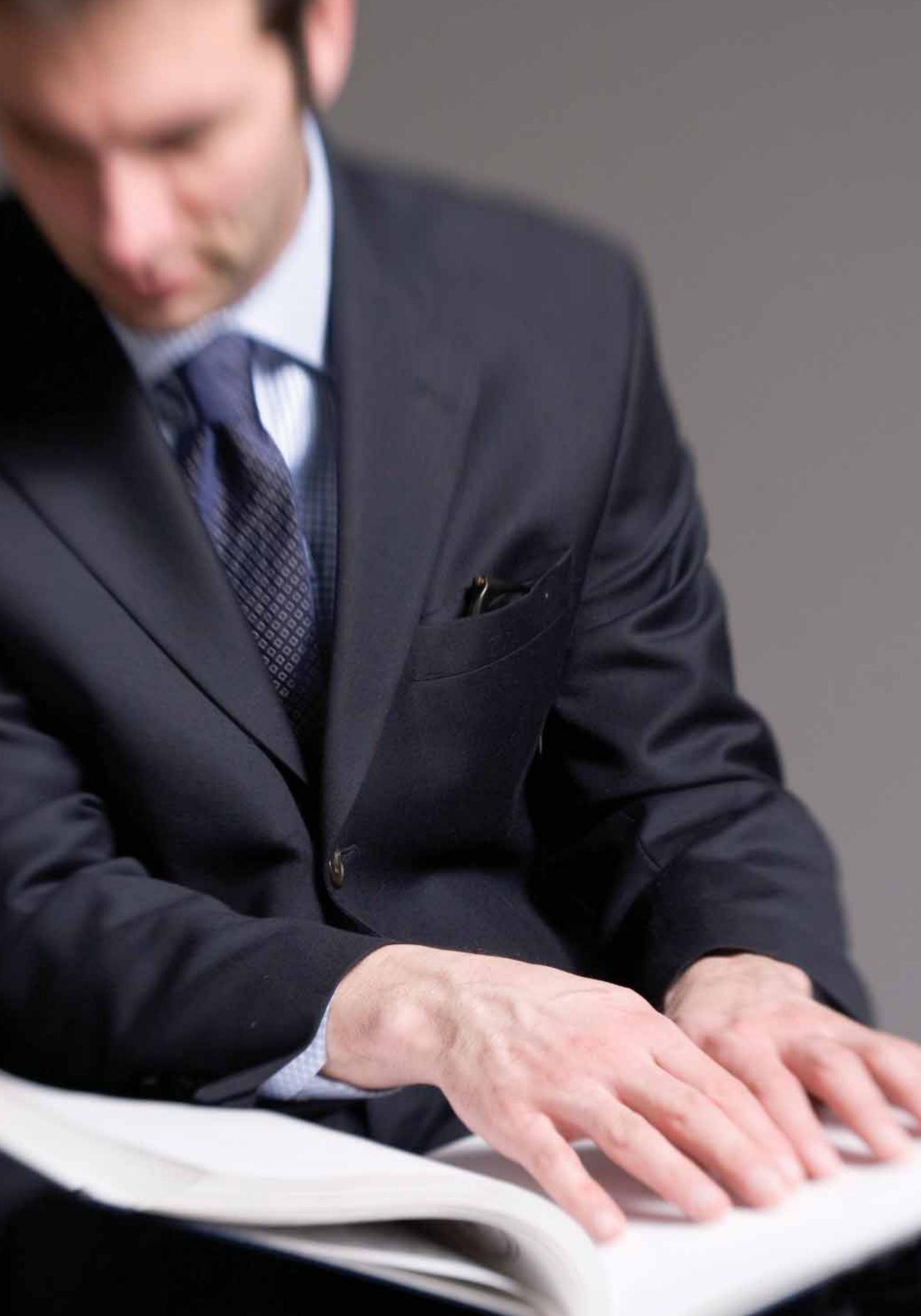
Target setting:

- Organisations should set, monitor and review targets in a positive way for the representation of people with disabilities within their organisation,
- Clear and direct support for meeting the specific targets should be provided by one or more Directors,
- Staff should be made aware of the rationale behind, and the importance of, target setting for equality and diversity.

Increasing equality and diversity:

- Organisations should run compulsory disability awareness training for all staff which enhances the workforce's understanding of the value of staff with disabilities,
- There should be a zero-tolerance policy and attitude towards disability discrimination.

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector



Section 3

Preparing the organisation

Increasing the recruitment of staff with disabilities is not something that a public body, or any other organisation, can do from a ‘standing start’. There are preparations that organisations have to make first, such as starting to create a culture where the capabilities and value of people with disabilities is recognised.

Addressing negative attitudes towards people with disabilities

Bert Massie, Chair of the UK Disability Rights Commission (DRC) argues that:

“probably the most damaging, consistent response to disability is simply the low expectations that we have of disabled people and for them”

(Speech to the National Disability Authority’s 5th Annual Disability Research Conference, November 2006).

In organisations, and in the public in general, there seems to be a great lack of awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities in and out of the workplace (e.g. Hinton, 2006; Jackson et al, 2000). In the Irish Civil Service, Murphy et al (2002) found that both civil servants with and without disabilities felt that staff with disabilities are subject to a negative attitude towards their capability, and that this low expectation is felt to be the biggest barrier in the way of their career progression.

Many other research studies have found that employers are afraid that staff with disabilities are expensive to employ, due to the necessary accommodations and reduced productivity that they believe would be inevitable (e.g. Colella, 1996; European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EFILWC), 1997; Kitchin et al, 1998).

Hinton (2006) and many others argue that measures designed to increase employment equity, such as quotas and anti-discrimination legislation, are not sufficient to address the barrier of negative attitudes. Alone, these do not address negative attitudes, or deal with people's stereotypes or fears about employing or working with staff with disabilities. In fact, they may have the opposite effect, if people feel forced to accept a change with which they are not comfortable.

What would be effective, however, is the creation within the organisation's culture of increased understanding of the realities of employing people with disabilities, and the valuing of this kind of diversity. Research suggests that increasing contact with people with disabilities helps to reduce stereotypes and fears (NDA, 2006), and that knowing someone at work who has a disability is likely to lead to more inclusive attitudes towards disability and greater awareness of disability legislation (DRC, 2002, cited in Massie, 2006). Therefore, organisations would probably benefit from a culture that is open to developing new and innovative approaches to inclusion, such as work placements, work shadowing, mentoring schemes and employer-based training.

Starting to create a culture of valuing disability diversity

There are many key facets to the culture of an organisation which values diversity and effectively manages equality. One the most

important of these facets is when as many staff as possible understand why such things are important and where sufficient numbers being consulted, where appropriate, is regarded as essential (Alban-Metcalf and Alban-Metcalf, 2003). The opposite situation is a culture where staff tend to be coerced into activities or ways of behaving without explanation or consultation.

In the case of valuing disability diversity, all staff in an organisation should undergo disability awareness training which includes a clear explanation of the statutory basis and the business case for employing staff with disabilities. To help communicate that this is important for the organisation, the training should be, at the very least, openly endorsed by, and possibly introduced (by video if necessary) by the Chief Executive. This is regarded as essential by a number of major organisations including Barclays Bank (DRC, 2006; NDA, 2005b; Edwards, 2004).

While this training should be designed to help participants understand the benefits of disability diversity in a non-coercive way (i.e. rather than simply telling them that it is important), it should be mandatory for staff to attend, particularly senior staff, since they largely determine the culture of the organisation (Goldstein, 1991; Wiggenghorn, 1990). Once existing staff have undergone the training, it is suggested that it should become part of the induction for all new recruits (Murphy et al, 2002) in order to imbed it in the organisation's culture.

Disability awareness training is the crucial starting point for creating a culture which values disability diversity. There are many other things that leaders, including line managers, need to demonstrate through their words and actions in order to fully create and sustain this within the organisation's culture, and they are addressed throughout this report.

A culture of flexibility and accommodation

Flexibility and accommodation are often essential to enable the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities. However, if they are not attributes of the culture of an organisation towards its staff in general, a lack of flexibility or accommodation cannot only block the ability for people with disabilities to work for the organisation, but providing it could lead to resentment among non-disabled staff that “special provisions” are being made only to staff with disabilities.

Research suggests that flexible working (such as part-time, home working or flexible hours) may often be particularly desirable for people with disabilities, where full-time, traditional models of employment can often mean excessive physical or mental stress for some people with disabilities (e.g. NDA, 2006; O’Connell and Russell, 2005; Kitchin et al, 1998). Indeed, flexible working practices benefit everyone in an organisation, and have been found to reduce turnover of key staff (Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), 2005).

Unfortunately, many public sector employers have been found to adhere to more rigid working practices (e.g. Capita and IES, 2001), which suggests that the benefits of flexibility and accommodation are not widely understood, nor are the costs of not being flexible and accommodating. It, therefore, seems essential that senior leaders come to understand the benefits of such an approach, and begin to require that of the managers and staff that they lead.

Making the organisation attractive to people with disabilities

Recruitment of employees always begins with an individual becoming aware of the organisation and a vacancy, and their decision to apply

for a job on the basis that they perceive it to be a good opportunity and place to work. The recruitment of people with disabilities, then, relies on not only the ability of the organisation to reach people with disabilities in the community, but also on making themselves attractive as an employer.

While special competitions can be useful in attracting large numbers of people with disabilities to an organisation at a given time, in order to successfully increase representation of disability in a public body, there needs to be a culture where it is regarded as the norm and good practice to make job advertising clear and accessible to an audience with disabilities. This means that a policy should be that all vacant posts are advertised widely (including to disability organisations and Government liaison officers such as in job centres) in line with best practice in accessibility, and that the policy is adhered to and monitored across all departments of the organisation.

Organisations in the US such as Citigroup, Eastman Kodak and Merrill Lynch are active in the recruitment of people with disabilities and have publicised that they partner with disability organisations at a local and national level to access potential staff with disabilities (Cole, 2006).

Research suggests that people with disabilities can have many fears about entering the world of employment (NDA, 2006) which can include low expectations of their ability to cope (Massie, 2006) and concern as to how welcome they will be in the recruitment process (e.g. Kitchin et al, 1998).

Therefore, it is important that there is established practice and expectations among staff involved in recruitment that the organisation should always make itself attractive to people with disabilities by, for example:

- clearly stating on advertisements and in recruitment packs that they are positive about disability,
- not including non-essential experience or skills or inappropriate wording in an advertisement,
- making procedures for application accessible,
- thinking about the accessibility of the workplace when advertising a post, and stating the location, wherever possible, and ensuring that signage around the recruitment area (and wider workplace) is clear.

The experience of current employees can also be an important factor in making the organisation attractive to new recruits with disabilities. Murphy et al (2002) found that two-thirds of the civil servants with a disability who responded to a survey indicated that they were happy with their current jobs, and the researchers suggested that this positive feeling could be capitalised upon in future to help publicise the civil service as an employer of choice.

Research in the area of leadership is increasingly focusing on the concept of 'engagement' in organisations, which is defined as:

“the extent to which employees thrive at work, are committed to their employer, and are motivated to do their best, for the benefit of themselves and their organisation”
(Stairs, Galpin, Page and Linley, 2006, p.20).

This research suggests that employees who are engaged are more likely to promote their organisation as an employer of choice. The

behaviours that increase engagement are ones which all leaders should enact for the good of all employees, not just those with disabilities, and are as simple as, for example, showing genuine concern for people and their aspirations as an individual. They are addressed in more detail in Section 6 of this report.

Key recommendations

Preparing the organisation to recruit more people with disabilities:

- Organisations need to realise the importance of preparing themselves in order to increase the number of staff with disabilities that they employ,
- Staff should be made aware of the capabilities of people with disabilities and stereotypes that they may hold should be challenged,
- Staff should be made aware of the business case for employing people with disabilities.

Increasing disability awareness:

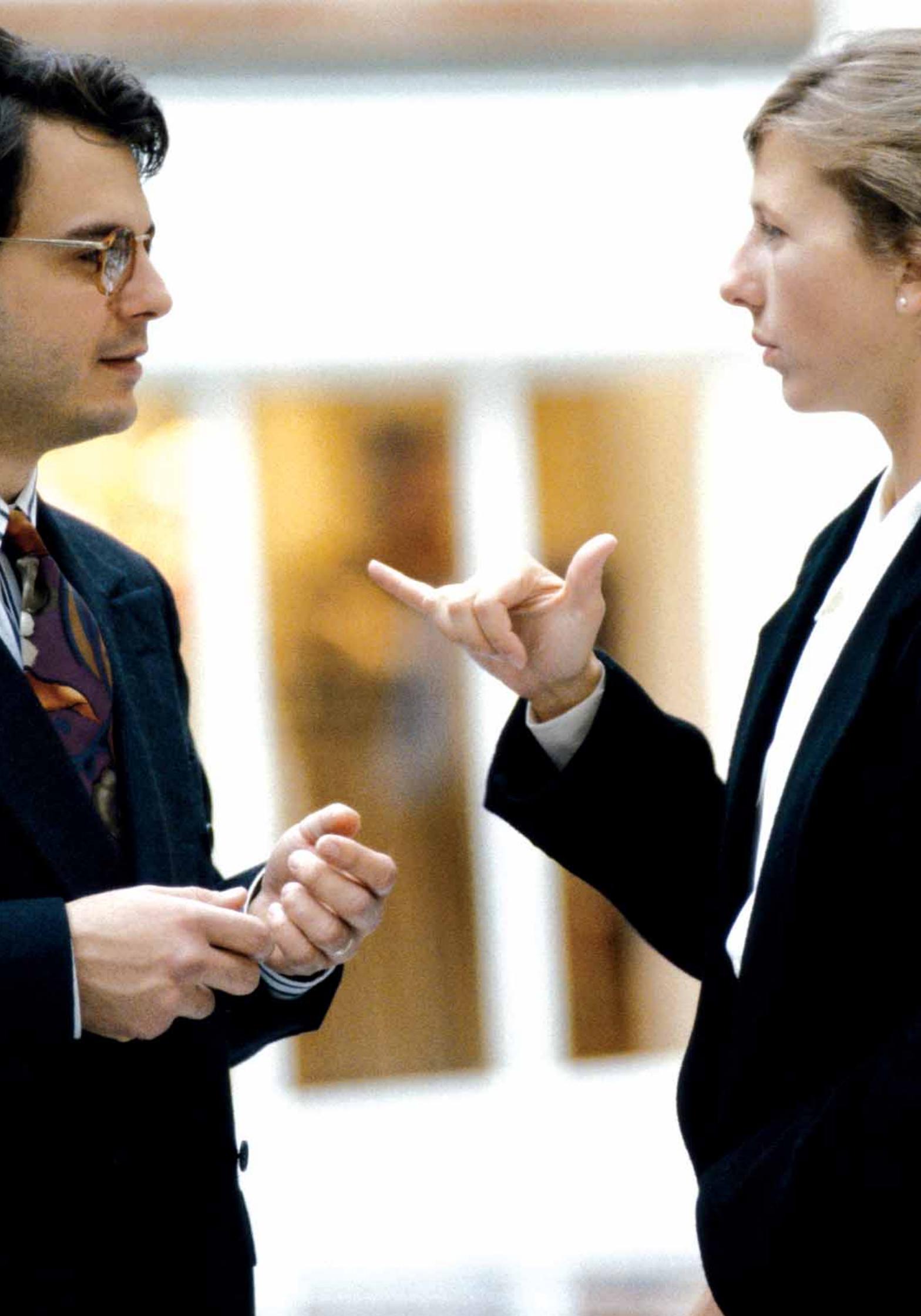
- Staff with disabilities should be introduced to the organisation through new and innovative approaches to inclusion and access to work, such as work placements,
- Disability awareness training should be introduced by the Chief Executive.

Making the organisation attractive and accessible to people with disabilities:

- A culture of flexibility and accommodation for all staff should be developed,

- Agencies should make disability organisations aware of new or vacant posts so that they can advertise them more widely among people with disabilities,
- Employers should carefully monitor job advertisements, person specifications and recruitment procedures for potential adverse impact,
- Organisations should work towards building a culture of engagement.

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector



Section 4

Recruiting staff with disabilities

As discussed in Section 3, equality and diversity cannot thrive without a culture in which there is thoughtful consideration by people of their actions and behaviours and the way that those actions will impact on others. This needs to be explicit from the initial contact people may have with an organisation, such as service provision or job advertisements, through recruitment and selection, and into day-to-day practice in the way people behave in the organisation.

In the recruitment and selection process, this means that staff should be expected to carefully consider the requirements set down, not only in terms of job descriptions and person specification but also in terms of the application process and the stages of selection that are designed for a post, such as:

- considering, as a general rule, the appropriate use of particular tests, including their validity and reliability in terms of equality and diversity or adverse impact,
- naturally asking all candidates whether they have any particular requirements from the recruitment process such as form of materials or interview arrangements,
- considering, as a general rule, the appropriateness of including work trials or work experience in a strategy for assessing applicants' capabilities,
- trying to include assessors with disabilities in the selection process.

Approach to job analysis and person specification

It is increasingly argued that the nature of job analysis has also changed since jobs themselves are no longer necessarily clusters of similar tasks but often collections of activities (e.g. Linley, Harrington and Hill, 2005). This means that recruitment which typically focuses on the job itself, rather than a potential incumbent, may be the wrong way around in selection decisions (Page and Boyle, 2005) and that selection should focus more on what people could do rather than what they can demonstrate having done in the past (Linley et al, 2005).

Given that people with disabilities tend to have had less opportunity than non-disabled candidates to demonstrate their capability through a clear job history, it seems that such an approach to recruitment and selection, as well as benefiting the organisation as a whole, would increase the chances of recruiting people with disabilities, and thus enabling them to harness their capabilities in a meaningful way.

This would require the support of the HR function to help managers learn to adopt a flexible approach to recruitment and selection when they identify a position for which this is an appropriate approach. It would also require the organisational culture to be open to, and indeed encouraging of, approaches to activities that might not be the way things have traditionally been done (see Section 7 for further discussion).

Interview approaches

Research in selection and assessment consistently shows that the interview stage of recruitment is a major source of potential bias and discrimination (e.g. Hirst et al, 2004). Therefore, it is essential

that organisations have a culture of strict adherence to best practice in fairness at this stage.

Competency-based interviewing is often suggested as a key way in which to minimise bias by requiring the interviewers to focus on job-related factors, and avoid straying into unrelated issues with a candidate. However, research specifically on the recruitment of people with disabilities in the public sector in Ireland suggests that this method alone does not differentiate between organisations that are successful and those that are not (Conroy and Fanagan, 2001). Rather, there are other factors to consider in reducing bias, as discussed below.

One key issue that needs to be addressed is the control of bias in the interviewers' expectations of the candidate. Everyone involved in the recruitment and selection process should be trained in disability awareness, including the importance of making no assumptions about ability, and focusing on capabilities rather than on candidates' possible performance restrictions (DfEE, 2003). An open mind is required as to the characteristics of the best person for the job, and an appreciation that optimal performers achieve outcomes in different ways.

In order for this to be a reality, and for organisations to select the best candidates, whatever their personal characteristics, having an open mind towards different experiences and approaches to the same end result needs to be an established part of the culture of the organisation. It is also crucial to monitor and review the recruitment and selection process in order to ensure its reliability, validity and to minimise adverse impact against diverse candidates.

Selection processes are often highly unreliable and invalid, and one major problem is that assessors evaluate candidates for a post while they are still gathering information, which leads to selective perception of candidates thereafter. Best practice in assessment emphasises the importance of training assessors not to evaluate candidates while they are interviewing them, or observing them in exercises, but to focus on gathering data against the assessment criteria, and only **after** all the data have been collected, making an assessment (Cook, 1993).

Thorough training for assessors is crucial in reducing prejudice, bias, and general bad practice, as is the presence of a well-trained chair of any assessment panel who ensures that best practice is exercised by assessors at all times.

A culture of confidence in disclosure

Research suggests that there is a great deal of fear among people with disabilities that if they reveal their disability, they will be discriminated against (e.g. Hirst et al, 2004; Kim, 2006; Murphy et al, 2002). One source of these fears is thought to be their experience at the hands of personnel officers in the past who are often not trained to deal with disability positively (EFILWC, 1997).

However, self-disclosure is essential not only for public bodies to be able to monitor equality and diversity, but also to give job candidates themselves a fair chance in recruitment through enabling the organisation to make any particular requirements available for them in selection and assessment. Like so many aspects of equality and diversity in organisations, disclosure creates benefits when there is a culture of consideration of the impact of one's actions and behaviours on others. This, in turn, requires

awareness of potential issues in disability and a culture of training staff to be knowledgeable about disability issues and the needs of others.

Medical examinations

Best practice in medical examination for selection is when the selection process and medical examination are separate; otherwise the results can unduly influence selection (DfEE, 2003). In a culture of valuing and effectively managing diversity, the focus is on whether the organisation can make adjustments to fit the best candidate for the job after they have been identified. This can be assessed through the assistance of the occupational health team, who are provided with a list of essential job requirements.

Partnership culture

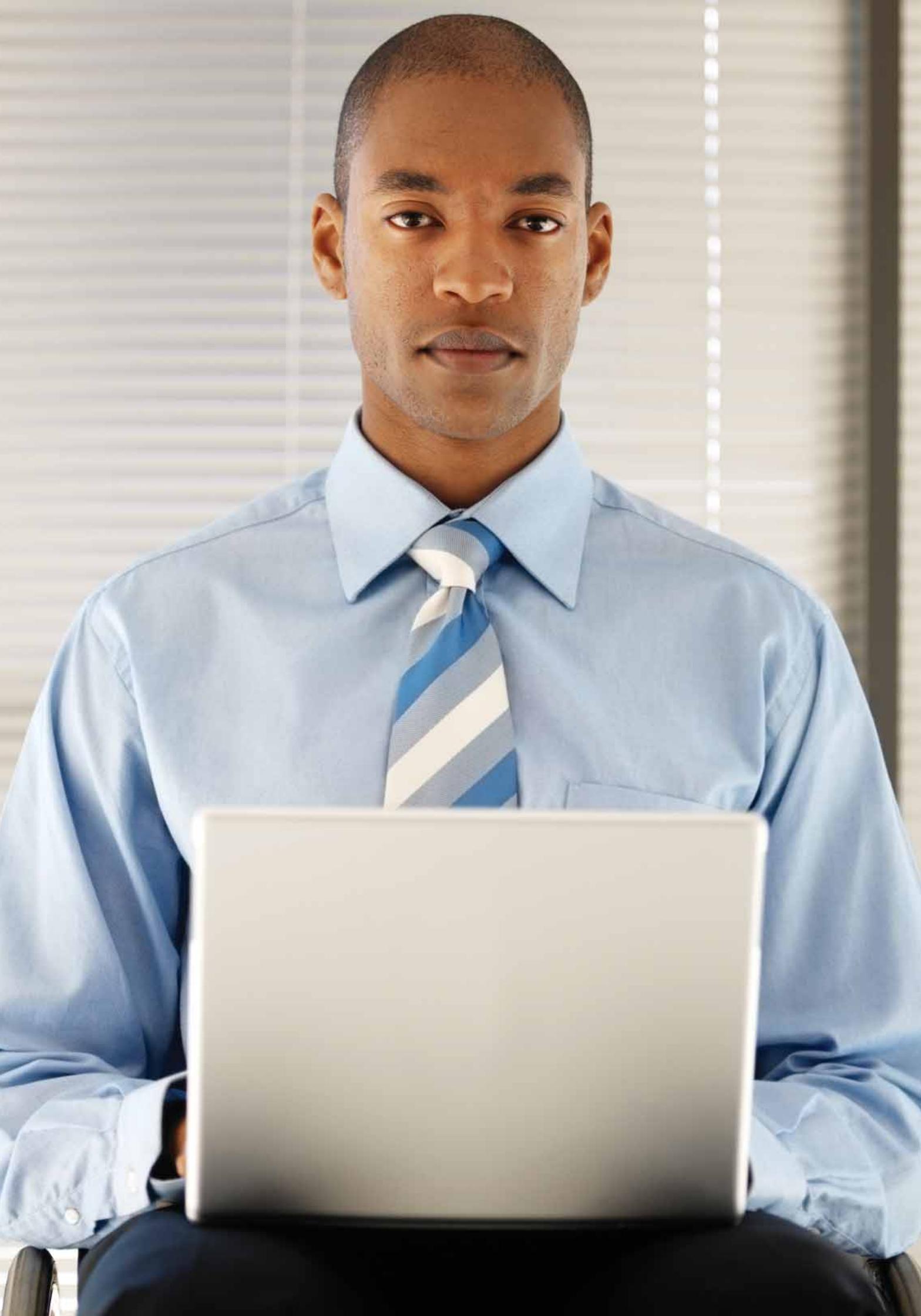
In recruitment, selection and all other areas of employment, public bodies would benefit from a culture of sharing best practice, ideas and possibly resources (such as holding joint competitions for jobs) with other organisations in a partnership approach (Equality Authority, 2004; Conroy and Fanagan, 2001). Potential partners should not be restricted to other public bodies, with private sector organisations often a source of useful information and examples of innovative and effective practice in this area.

Key recommendations

- Those involved in recruitment and selection should be required to ensure that the processes they employ comply with best practice,

- Every attempt should be made to include a person with a disability on selection panels for jobs,
- Organisations should consider flexible approaches to recruitment and selection that are less likely to have an adverse impact on people with disabilities,
- Everyone involved in selection should be thoroughly trained in avoiding bias,
- Job applicants should be encouraged to state whether they have a disability,
- Medical examinations should be kept separate from the selection process until the best person for the job has been identified,
- Public bodies should consider partnering with other organisations, including those in the private sector, to share best practice, ideas and resources in recruitment and selection.

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector



Section 5

Induction, training and support for staff with disabilities

The importance of effective induction

It has long been established that the early experiences of organisational socialisation can have a significant, long-term impact on a newcomer's well-being and commitment to an organisation (e.g. Reis Louis, 1980). An effective induction period is crucial to helping a person to integrate successfully into an organisation, and this has a strong influence on their perceptions of the culture of the organisation (e.g. Schein, 1985; Settoon and Adkins, 1997). Inductions also have a strong influence on the intentions of an employee to remain with, or leave, an organisation (e.g. Firth, Mellor, Moore and Loquet, 2004). According to Workway and Hatton and colleagues, people with disabilities may often leave their job at an early stage because of a poor induction (Workway, 2007; Hatton, Emerson, Rivers, Mason, Swarbrick, Mason, Kiernan, Reeves and Alborz, 2001).

In common with all other aspects of the employment process, the culture of the organisation should be one in which careful consideration is given to the suitability of the induction process for the particular job incumbent. For example, some people with brain injuries may prefer one-on-one, as opposed to group, inductions (Workway, 2007), while many other aspects also need to be attended to, such as the style of presentation of materials, pace of the induction, etc.. There should also be a culture of willingness to learn,

as many inductions would benefit from the deliverer consulting with experts in a particular disability about possible requirements, rather than relying solely on the job incumbent to point them out.

Training issues

In a study of managers with a disability working in the public sector in the UK, the accessibility of, and encouragement to take up, training and development opportunities were found to have the strongest links with career satisfaction, of the many factors measured (Alban-Metcalf, 2004a). This finding highlights the importance of access to training and development for all employees.

Alban-Metcalf's study, however, found that managers with disabilities were significantly less likely than non-disabled managers to report that their organisation makes training and development accessible to them, and that their line manager encourages them to pursue training opportunities.

There are key implications here for both culture and leadership. The culture of the organisation must be one in which the training and development of staff is regarded as crucially important, and should be regularly reviewed, monitored, and lessons learned, with respect to all staff. Furthermore, it is one of the prime responsibilities of all of the leaders in an organisation to undertake monitoring of whether line managers regularly assess necessary accommodations for, and training and development needs of, their staff, and provide solutions for them in a timely manner.

An effective culture of equality and diversity is one in which training is just one more area in which awareness of equality and diversity issues is regarded as paramount. Research suggests that the experience of trainers in providing training to people with disabilities

is not a sufficient safeguard against inappropriate practice. Rather, trainers may have been doing the wrong things for a great many years (Kitchin et al, 1998), which means that in this, as other areas, agencies cannot be complacent.

Providing recruits with disabilities with social support

For all employees, being provided with a ‘buddy’ or a mentor can have very beneficial effects on their integration into the organisation, as well as provide a key social support for them to help them to adjust to their new role (e.g. Settoon and Adkins, 1997). Research suggests that employees with disabilities could particularly benefit from a more experienced person in the organisation who has a disability themselves, as they can provide a positive role model for how a person with disabilities can develop and progress in the organisation (Murphy et al, 2002).

Another way in which having a ‘buddy’ can help improve equality and diversity in organisations is through ‘diversity pairing’, which is putting together two different types of people – an effective tool in reducing stereotypes about each other (Joplin and Daus, 1997) and ‘complementary pairing’ or ‘double acts’, which is a concept that describes the partnering of employees with complementary skills (Linley et al, 2005). Complementary pairing is a concept from positive psychology which, it is suggested, should be applied to all employees when appropriate, in order to enable people’s strengths to be most effectively deployed. Clear benefits seem to be possible if complementary pairing is applied to employees with disabilities which have traditionally restricted their capabilities in a particular area.

What diversity pairing and complementary pairing rely on, however, is a culture in which they are encouraged and supported, and a

leadership approach which perpetuates this. A developmental, supportive culture, therefore, seems to be an important pre-requisite for the success of social support (e.g. Alimo-Metcalfe, Alban-Metcalfe, Samele, Bradley and Mariathan, 2007; Cunningham, Woodward, Shannon, MacIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom and Brown, 2002).

Another potential source of important social support is network group membership. Many organisations have encouraged the formation of such groups to enable employees who identify themselves as a group demographically (such as employees with disabilities) to meet in the workplace to share experiences, offer support, and come up with innovative solutions to issues such as accessibility (Grensing-Pophal, 2002; Edwards, 2004). It is also suggested that staff with disabilities feel a particular pressure to make others feel comfortable around their disability (Colella and Varma, 2001), which is an added burden that they may find useful to share with peers who also have disabilities.

Like the other social support mechanisms in organisations, network groups rely on a supportive, learning culture in order to thrive and create a positive impact on their members and the organisation as a whole. If not properly managed, network groups can become talking shops where members may mostly share bad experiences in the organisation, thus dragging down the organisational commitment of the other members, or they may fight for action to be taken upon recommendations they have developed for the organisation, yet find that there is insufficient interest for any action to be taken. However, if senior leaders are committed to making a positive change for staff, whatever their personal characteristics, and provide a direct line of communication to senior leaders and pay attention to what network groups are sharing with them, then they can be a very positive, organisation-enhancing activity. For example, in the US, Kodak have set up an annual meeting between their

disability network group and the CEO and Chair of the company in order that they can learn at first hand about the issues that people with disabilities face in the workplace, and thus decide how to address them (Cole, 2006).

Key recommendations

Conducting effective inductions:

- As a matter of course, individualised approaches to staff inductions should be designed,
- The person who delivers the induction should help the new job incumbent to identify any requirements they have in order to work most efficiently.

Encouraging a training and development culture:

- Training and development should be made available for all staff, and line managers should be assessed by their bosses on the extent to which they are actively identifying and addressing staff development needs and aspirations,
- All those who deliver training should be educated on the disability awareness issues that surround training.

Providing effective social support:

- Organisations should consider setting up a 'buddy' system for new recruits and possibly placing people in 'complementary pairs',
- Organisations should work to build a culture in which social support is strongly encouraged,
- Organisations should consider encouraging staff with disabilities to form a network group, and provide the group with a direct line of communication to the Board of Directors.



Section 6

Leadership style and career development in the retention of staff with disabilities

The influence of line manager leadership style

Studies of employees, regardless of occupation, level or demographic group, consistently find that the greatest source of stress and demotivation at work is a negative relationship with their line manager (e.g. Borrill, West and Dawson, 2005a, b; Hogan, Curphy and Hogan, 1994; Offerman and Hellman, 1996). Conversely, however, a positive relationship with a line manager can have an enormous impact on reducing work-related stress and increasing motivation and organisational commitment (Alban-Metcalf and Alimo-Metcalf, 2000; Alimo-Metcalf and Alban-Metcalf, 2003; Bass, 1998; Bogler, 2001; Lok and Crawford, 1999; Medley and Larochelle, 1995).

Employees with disabilities, in particular, can find the experience of work stressful since they are often subject to a greater range of challenges created by their disability and the work environment (being more often than not designed for the non-disabled person). Therefore, a positive leadership style is a key factor in ensuring that staff with disabilities have a motivating experience at work and remain committed to the organisation.

The largest ever study of leadership, which involved 4,000 managers in the UK public and private sector, found that the single most important positive leadership factor was whether the leader shows genuine concern for their staff (Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe, 2000; Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2001; 2006). Repeated studies across a variety of sectors, and carried out independently by government bodies, have consistently confirmed that this factor of leadership is the one most strongly associated with increased motivation, organisational commitment, job satisfaction and reducing job-related stress (e.g. Dobby, Anscombe and Tuffin, 2004).

What this leadership factor means in practice is a manager displaying individual-focused behaviours and attitudes such as showing genuine interest in staff as individuals, trying to see the world through their eyes, showing that they value their contribution, developing their strengths through coaching and mentoring, and having positive expectations of what their staff can achieve (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2003).

Showing genuine concern is the key factor in what is known as 'engaging' leadership. Through its positive influence on staff, engaging leadership has been demonstrated as being linked to significantly increased organisational productivity and superior organisational performance (Towers Perrin, 2005; Flade, 2003; Watson Wyatt, 2006). It celebrates 'difference', and encourages staff to challenge the way things are done, and to suggest more effective ways of working.

Other key factors in an engaging style of leadership are:

- most importantly, a genuine interest in staff as individuals, seeing the world through their eyes, showing an interest in their aspirations and development needs,

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector

- communicating a clear vision which provides meaning for the work of others and stresses the importance of their contributions,
- clarifying objectives, and taking a team-oriented approach to their achievement – engaging others in discussing the values by which they will be achieved, and seeking suggestions as to the means by which they will be achieved,
- valuing the contributions of every person, and enabling them to see how crucial their contribution is to the organisation's success,
- empowering individuals by encouraging them to use their discretion in what they do and to take responsibility for their efforts and the consequences of their actions,
- encouraging staff to question the status quo, and how they perform their roles, seeking their suggestions for better ways of working and supporting them in implementing their ideas,
- acting with integrity, and openness to criticism and disagreement, seeing this as potentially constructive, reinforcing management's willingness to listen and learn,
- seeking feedback as to how management is impacting on staff's motivation and effectiveness – showing some humility, without abrogating leadership responsibilities.

As equally important as being able to lead in an engaging way is that a manager is able to adapt their leadership style to what is most appropriate in a given situation with each individual. Focusing on the needs of an individual, without sufficient focus on the basics of managing performance, such as clarifying and setting objectives, providing honest performance feedback and being directive rather than consultative when it is appropriate, can lead to poor performance and be extremely negative for an employee and the organisation.

Furthermore, it may take some employees time to get used to an engaging style of leadership, particularly if they are new to the world of employment, and thus they may require a more directional style at first. Others may always prefer a more directive style, so the key to effective leadership is seeking feedback from staff and learning to be able to judge what is the best style to adopt at the time.

One of the important factors in managing staff is setting standards for how people should be treated in the organisation. Line managers and all staff in senior positions need to be very clear in a zero-tolerance approach, to any form of discrimination or harassment. It is the particular responsibility of those in positions of responsibility that they set an example to staff, and that they deal with unacceptable behaviour or performance in an effective way, i.e. by actively dealing with the problem, rather than moving the problem individual elsewhere, or relying too heavily on a verbal warning alone to sort it out. However, such behaviour should be regarded as the organisational norm expected of all individuals, irrespective of their level or role.

The importance of a feedback culture

Leadership does not require a person to be superhuman. Rather, it is believed that a person can develop a more effective and engaging style, even if this does not come naturally to them.

Key to effective leadership and management in general, and engaging leadership in particular, is the level of self-awareness the manager has about their leadership style and the impact it has on others (e.g. Atwater, Waldman, Ostroff, Robie and Johnson, 2005; Church, 1997). Self-awareness can be developed through informally requesting feedback from one's boss, colleagues or staff, and is most effectively gathered through the use of a well-developed 360-degree feedback system.

Crucially, the 360-degree feedback instrument must assess appropriate leadership factors for the context and purpose, and it must be administered for developmental purposes only; ratings must be anonymised, and the feedback report must be seen as the start, not the end, of a journey of personal development for the manager. More details relating to the appropriate use of 360-degree feedback can be found on the British Psychological Society's website.¹

The importance of senior leadership style

Research into why leadership development initiatives in organisations can fail (Alimo-Metcalfe et al, 2001) illustrates that the most effective approaches to leadership development in organisations are those where even the most senior managers in the organisation are as equally committed to personal development as are other managers. When this group is on board, leadership behaviours regarded as desirable in line with the style the organisation is seeking to enhance are recognised and rewarded, as are changes in the organisation and ways people work which enact a more positive leadership approach.

Furthermore, managers may often need support in order to effectively support equality and diversity, such as the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities (e.g. Seebohm and Grove, 2006). Their own bosses, then, should be keen to be supportive and willing to provide resources, if necessary, for them to be able to contract expert advice where appropriate.

Organisations need to ensure that the leadership culture of the organisation is appropriate to engage staff with disabilities and non-disabled staff, and that their most senior managers demonstrate their commitment to develop, and help others develop, in the same way.

¹ www.bps.org.uk

Leadership and relationship diversity

Research by Alban-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2003) investigated the appropriate culture for organisations that value equality and diversity, and, from these findings, created an organisational culture instrument, to support diagnosis prior to an organisational development intervention. They found considerable overlap between the features of a culture which values and effectively manages equality and diversity, and a culture of engaging leadership.

There were, however, also some additional behaviours necessary with respect to the leadership style required to support a culture of valuing and effectively managing equality and diversity. In essence, these were the need to understand the nature of equality and diversity issues, such as ethnicity, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, and to be aware of their natural inclinations in how they behave when someone is different to them.

Psychologists often refer to what they call 'attribution theory' or 'the halo and horns effect' (e.g. Heneman, Greenberger and Anonyuo, 1989). This concept describes the fact that, by nature, we tend to attribute positive characteristics to people who are similar to ourselves, such as intelligence or friendliness, and that we tend to give less positive attributions to people who are different to ourselves. This effect is reduced significantly when we get to know someone well, but often relationships between a line manager and an employee do not become familiar enough to cross this boundary, particularly when they are demographically dissimilar people.

The implications for the working experience of staff with disabilities who have a non-disabled manager, can be significant and negative. Colella and Varma (2001) undertook research which examined the relationship between staff with disabilities and their line managers,

and found that with a non-disabled manager, non-disabled staff tended to enjoy a higher quality relationship than did staff with disabilities.

Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1993) have examined attribution theory in some detail in relation to another type of difference – ethnicity. They found that the physical difference between a White manager and a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) member of staff, led to the manager being more likely to attribute successful performance to luck, whereas poor performance was likely to be attributed to the fault of the individual. Conversely, they tended to attribute White staff members' successes to their ability, and failures to bad luck.

In an earlier study, Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley (1990) found that even when BME staff had good performance records, their prospects of being promoted were rated lower than those of White staff with the same level of performance records. Similarly, Knight, Hebl, Foster and Mannix (2003) found that BME leaders had to be more exceptional performers than the norm in order to be able to counteract stereotypes held by others that they were not expected to be leaders in an organisation. The researchers also found that raters used any mistake the BME employees had made, no matter how small, to justify giving them lower performance ratings. The researchers did not feel that this was conscious discrimination, but rather a result of people's natural aversion to examples of others challenging their expectations – which is, in effect, a much more powerful form of discrimination.

There is very little research on disability issues relative to other types of difference, such as ethnicity or gender, and it does not seem that attribution theory has been widely tested to look at the issue of disability in this way. However, it does seem likely that the same differences may well occur, given previous findings that visible disability is often related to attributions of lower intelligence or

inaccurate assumptions of a concurrent learning disability (Hinton, 2006; Jackson et al, 2000).

Another finding from the field of attribution theory which organisations should be aware of relates to 'in-group' and 'out-group' status. Working in the field of ethnicity research, Ilgen and Youtz (1986) found that line managers tend to unconsciously assign staff they manage to either the 'in-group' or the 'out-group' based on their membership of the majority demographic group. This assignment of 'out-group' status and a lower-quality relationship between a line manager and a member of staff are associated with the supervisor giving the staff member less discretion in their job than others in the 'in-group' or with whom they have a better-quality relationship. This is interpreted as being due to the managers feeling more able to trust the ability of those individuals.

A possible replication of this finding among staff with disabilities was found in a study of managers with disabilities in the UK public sector by Alban-Metcalfe (2004a). Survey responses indicated that these managers were significantly less likely than non-disabled managers to report that:

- their boss assigns them special projects to increase their visibility in the organisation,
- their boss provides them with assignments that give them the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills.

Further research is clearly needed among staff with disabilities and non-disabled managers to clarify this issue, but it does seem likely that some unconscious discrimination could be taking place within these relationships which could have a significant effect on stifling career development.

On a positive note, it does seem that by making people aware of attribution theory, and leading them through exercises where they have the opportunity to explore their natural reactions and the situation of disadvantage for themselves, can begin to break down some of their prejudices. However, it is not traditionally explored in this way in disability awareness or anti-discrimination training. It seems crucial that line managers, in particular, are made aware of the issue, and participate in exercises that help them to address such issues in relation to their relationships with their staff.

Career development culture

Crucial to the retention of staff is their perceptions of whether they will be able to develop within an organisation in a way that meets their aspirations (e.g. Goldsmith Fitzgerald, 1999, cited in Murphy et al, 2002). Researchers often refer to the ‘revolving door’ phenomenon (e.g. Thomas, 2001). This describes the situation where organisations successfully recruit diverse staff but, because there are barriers to the career development of these staff within the organisation, they become stifled in their careers and eventually leave. Clearly this is counterproductive to equality and diversity and is very costly for an organisation in terms of turnover.

As is the case in the general population, there are some people with disabilities who are not interested in career progression, or for whom a job that what others might regard as ‘routine’ or ‘boring’ is very fulfilling. Unfortunately, however, research seems to suggest that people with disabilities who would like to progress their careers are often not given the same opportunity as non-disabled people.

In their study of the Irish Civil Service, Murphy et al (2002) found that more than 40% of civil servants with a disability felt that they do not have the same opportunities for career progression as

those who are non-disabled, and that special entry competitions for staff with disabilities may be a barrier to career progression for those selected.

Alban-Metcalf (2004a) found, in a study of UK local government managers with disabilities, that they were significantly less likely than non-disabled managers to report that their organisation has made the training and development they need in order to progress very accessible. In her sample, there was no significant difference between the career development aspirations of the managers who had disabilities and those who did not.

For career progression to be available to staff, the organisation must support a culture of developing people, and line managers need to be held accountable for the development of their staff members. O'Riordan and Humphries (2002) found that there was little evidence that departments and HR units in the Irish civil service believed that they had any obligation to develop staff. Furthermore, research in the civil service in the UK found that staff with disabilities felt that their performance capabilities and ability to cope under pressure was questioned, and thus more senior posts might be considered too hard for them to handle (Capita and IES, 2001). This underlines the need for awareness training across organisations in recognising the capabilities of people with disabilities, rather than focusing on any limitations they may be perceived to possess.

Murphy et al (2002) identify that the absence record of an employee with disabilities may be a barrier to their career progression, and the NDA highlights the fact that people with disabilities are much less likely to have formal second-level qualifications (NDA, 2006). What these findings underline is the need for organisations to treat their staff as individuals, or as is often described in the equality and diversity literature, there is a

need to treat people differently while, at the same time, treating them fairly (Massie, 2006).

In order for this approach to work, it needs to be embedded in the values, practices and behaviours of the organisation's culture, rather than just being left to the discretion of managers, since it could potentially lead to resentment among other staff if the reasons are not justified, and may also restrict the manager's ability to make adjustments or arrangements for a particular member of staff.

In the case of formal qualifications, managers need to have the ability to fund staff training towards formal qualifications where appropriate, or the discretion not to require formal qualifications for particular jobs where they are not essential.

Line managers have a crucial role to play in enabling the career development of staff with disabilities, as they do with all staff, particularly through offering support and encouragement for them to pursue opportunities (Murphy et al, 2002) and through providing them with adequate positive and constructive critical feedback (Alban-Metcalf, 2004a,b).

Unfortunately, however, Alban-Metcalf (2004a) found that managers with disabilities were significantly less likely than non-disabled managers to report that their boss supports their attempts to acquire additional training or education to further their career.

Since the nature of disabilities varies so greatly, and not all people with disabilities describe having difficulty working, the career development of people with disabilities will often be straightforward (Maguire, 2005). However, in the case of some disabilities, some

degree of innovation or flexibility may be appropriate, such as job rotation, work shadowing, mentoring, coaching and increased use of secondments or transfers.

So as to guard against losing staff with disabilities because they feel stifled in their career development, it is crucial that the culture of the organisation is receptive to flexibility in forms of career development. Line managers must also be required to enquire about and address the development needs and career aspirations of all staff, and be provided with funding and sufficient autonomy and flexibility in order to do this.

A lack of confidence in their abilities is said to be prevalent among staff with disabilities (Massie, 2006; Murphy et al, 2002). Given that this may also be the case for people who are non-disabled, it is, therefore, in the best interests of the organisation to create a culture of encouragement and support of all people to develop themselves and their careers. This may involve mentoring or the assignment of sponsors and/or coaches.

However, there are more and less useful forms of career guidance. An organisation cannot simply put in place a system where people are assigned a mentor or sponsor, and then expect that the relationships will be career-enhancing. Rather, research has shown that mentoring and sponsor relationships can frequently be ineffective. In a study of career development of just under 2,000 UK public sector employees, Alban-Metcalfe (2004a) found that although there was no significant difference between the likelihood that the managers with disabilities and the non-disabled managers reported that their mentors were useful in helping to progress their careers, neither group overall regarded their mentors as particularly useful in this regard.

Looking at the issue of sponsors, the same study found that, overall, managers with disabilities disagreed, and non-disabled managers slightly disagreed, that their sponsor assigns them special projects to increase their visibility within the organisation (Alban-Metcalfe, 2004a).

Thomas (1990) makes the point that in mentoring and sponsorship relationships where there is difference between the employee and the mentor/sponsor (such as a cross-racial relationship), there is often a need to provide additional support or training to the mentor/sponsor to help them to make the most of the relationship, such as how to avoid feeling that certain topics are taboo. In the case of disability, this could include the nature of a person's disability, or how it affects their performance or career progression.

Jones (1986) also points to the fact that in organisations there are often subconscious images in people's heads as to what 'winners' and 'losers' look like – based on the general image of those in the most senior leadership positions. The more dissimilar a person is to that image, the less likely people are to want to be led by that person (as a manager), and the less likely sponsors are to feel safe providing them with visible assignments that may expose them negatively if they do not result in a successful outcome.

Based on these research findings, organisations need to ensure that they take the subject of mentoring and sponsorship seriously, and apply sufficient energy, importance, funding, and training resources to it. In addition, organisations need to support the career development of staff with disabilities and disability awareness training so that people who have disabilities are also 'winners' in the organisation to help ameliorate the potentially limiting effects of these not being in place.

Performance management culture

A robust performance management culture is very important for organisations to thrive (e.g. Patterson and West, 1997). This should include regular formal reviews of staff performance and regular informal opportunities when line managers offer staff both positive and constructive critical feedback.

Discussions about performance are key events during which line managers need to be aware of the possibility of unconscious discrimination due to attribution theory. Alban-Metcalf (2004b), in a study of bias in performance appraisal, found evidence that white male bosses were discriminatory towards female and BME staff in their ratings of performance. Given the issues described earlier around attribution theory, it seems likely that staff with disabilities may often be discriminated against when they take part in performance appraisals led by non-disabled line managers who are not aware of the potential for personal bias. This again highlights the importance of raising line managers' awareness.

In a study of central government employees in the UK, Capita and IES (2001) found that staff who had a better relationship with their line manager because of demographic similarity in gender or ethnicity tended to fare better in performance review discussions as they felt more confident to argue their case for higher ratings.

If staff with disabilities have a lower-quality relationship with their line manager, and given the issues around the often relatively lower confidence among staff with disabilities in the workplace, it seems likely that they may also be subject to unfairness in performance reviews for this reason. Thus, when being trained in issues relating to attribution theory, it is important also that line managers are strongly encouraged to approach performance review discussions by focussing

on asking their staff for specific behavioural examples of good performance, and that they also provide such feedback to their staff.

They should also constructively discuss areas of performance where they perceive performance problems, but in order to ensure that their perceived criticism is not as a result of their prejudice, they must prepare thoughtfully and reflect before the discussion on specific behaviours they have observed which they believe contribute to such issues. The review should then become a constructive and valuable two-way discussion, in which the outcome is one of learning and development for the individual involved. They should also be sensitive to offering criticism of staff who are less confident, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.

In order to capitalise as much as possible on staff's strengths for their own good, and for the good of the organisation, positive psychology encourages managers to offer timely positive and constructive critical feedback to staff throughout the year, in order that the performance review discussion can focus mainly on strengths (Brook, 2006). This is not to say that development needs should be ignored, but that it is important that managers are encouraged to focus also on positives at least as much, if not more, than negatives.

The issue of providing performance feedback is crucial, whether or not a positive psychology approach is adopted. Alban-Metcalf (2004a) found that middle managers with disabilities were less likely to report receiving constructive, critical feedback than non-disabled middle managers. Feedback is an essential part of an employees' development in an organisation, as part of a robust performance management framework, and so it is essential that it is provided to staff with disabilities and non-disabled staff alike, always giving specific behavioural examples to support their observations (e.g. Alban-Metcalf, 2004b).

Positive psychologists advocate the development of ‘strengths-based organisations’. What this means, is that organisations should realise that no one person is likely to excel at everything in their job description, so they should encourage a culture in which people are deployed as effectively as possible in relation to their key strengths (Linley et al, 2005; Page and Boyle, 2005). Within this approach, managers should use their discretion in focusing on competencies that are not necessarily business-critical, and consider removing such competencies when jobs are updated, which good practice suggests should be conducted on a regular basis.

The performance review discussion provides an important opportunity for managers to assess some of the creative ways in which they can redeploy tasks or people they manage. It is also an opportunity to help improve a staff member’s development needs or weaknesses through support and increasing accommodations made for them (whether they have disabilities or not), offer them the opportunity to partner people who are more competent in certain areas, offer to employ new technologies, etc. (Brook, 2006). It is also a key time to discuss options that are related to career development through possible promotion or transfer (DfEE, 2003).

A culture of ensuring accommodation for everyone

In a positive culture of equality and diversity, managers should involve themselves in regularly taking time to ask all of their staff (whether or not they have a disability) whether they have the resources to work to the best of their ability, not just during a formal performance review (e.g. Alban-Metcalf and Alban-Metcalf, 2003). Furthermore, it should never be assumed that accommodations have been effective, but rather it should be normal practice to follow up on them.

In considering any necessary changes, managers also need to think through the possible implications for staff other than the person or people for whom the change would benefit (e.g. Seebohm and Grove, 2006). A culture where people are encouraged to be considerate towards the impact of their behaviour or actions on others should be developed within public bodies to increase the chances that this becomes a regular practice.

Similarly, it is important that decisions and processes that are already in place are examined to ensure that they do not disadvantage particular types of people, however innocuously (Equality Authority, 2004). It is also important that planning at a strategic or other level always incorporates consideration of maximising equality and diversity in the outcome (Alban-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2003). This can be encouraged by a culture in which formal and informal consultation is welcomed and is regarded as important for efficiency and the avoidance of adverse impact in organisational and workforce issues.

Key recommendations

Developing a culture of engagement:

- Senior leaders and managers throughout the organisation should be encouraged to demonstrate genuine concern for their staff, such as showing genuine interest in them, developing their strengths and having positive expectations of what they can achieve,
- Leadership should be developed throughout the organisation which perpetuates a culture of engagement.

Managing performance effectively:

- Managers should be supported in learning how to take a more directive style of management where appropriate,
- Managers should be encouraged to seek feedback from their staff as to the impact of their behaviour,
- Managers should actively adopt a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination or harassment whether witnessed or heard about,
- A strong performance management culture should be developed within the organisation,
- Managers should be trained in conducting fair performance reviews, and they should include a significant amount of focus on capabilities and future development,
- Managers should be developed and encouraged to provide regular positive and constructive, critical feedback to staff,
- Managers should be encouraged to carefully consider the requirements for particular competencies in a job and the deployment of tasks among their team,
- Managers need to be made aware of biased attributions of performance or capability and how they can counteract them.

Encouraging a developmental culture:

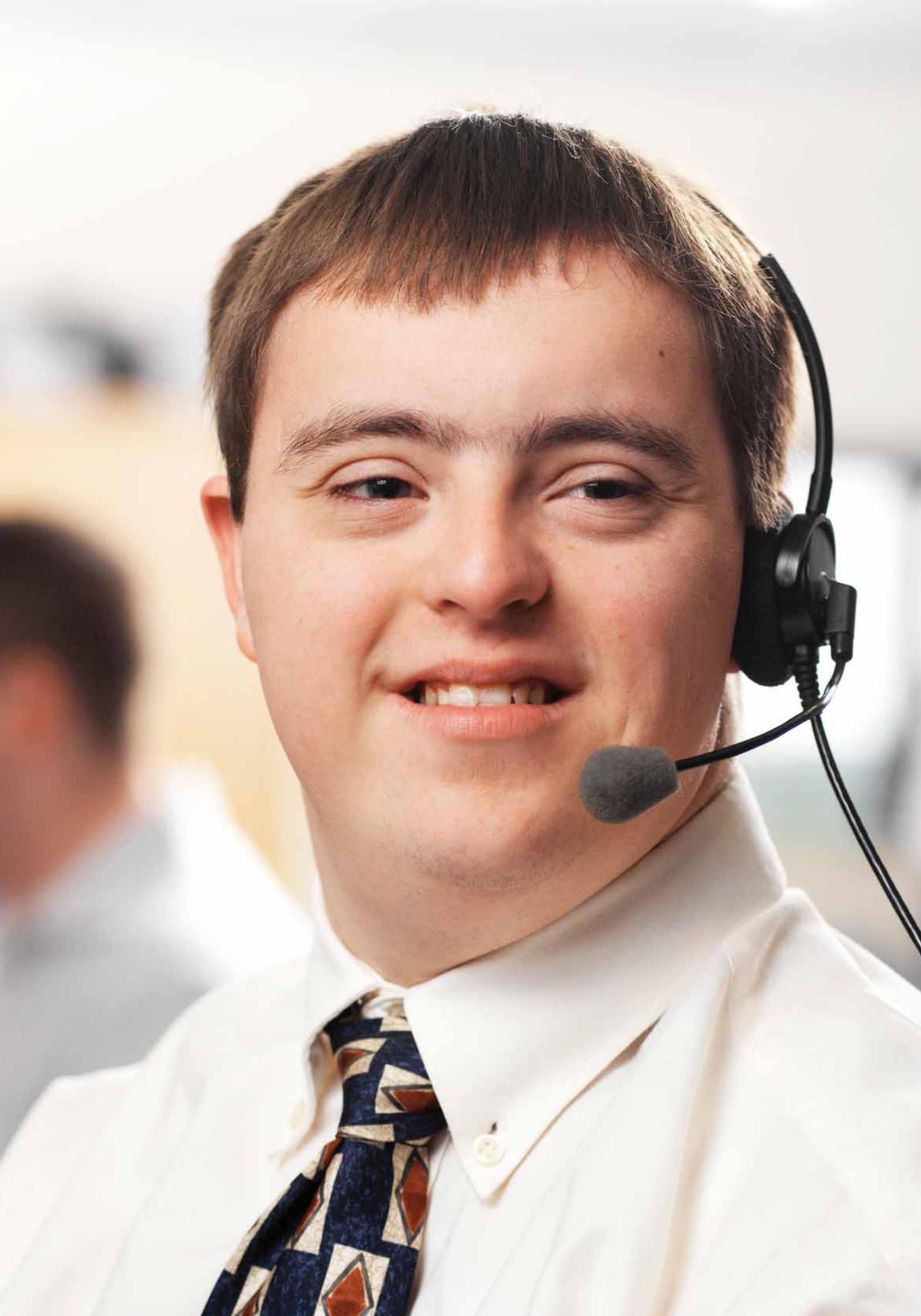
- Organisations should require their leaders to develop themselves in relation to their leadership capability,
- Managers should be encouraged to increase their self-awareness through requesting regular feedback, and possibly through the use of 360-degree feedback,

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector

- Any 360-degree feedback systems adopted must be administered in line with best practice,
- Senior managers should lead the way in the self-development of leadership capacity,
- Organisations should promote a developmental culture towards all staff and managers,
- Managers should be assessed on the extent to which they develop all their staff,
- Mentoring and sponsorship should be encouraged within the organisation.

Enabling an effective workforce:

- The culture of the organisation should not be one of a blanket approach to issues, but rather each case should be taken on its merits within certain guidelines,
- Managers should enquire about accommodations that can be made for everyone, not just staff with disabilities,
- Managers should think through the implications for others when they consider making accommodations for staff,
- It should not be assumed that accommodations made were effective; rather, they should be followed up,
- A policy of examining current processes and future planning for adverse impact, and how things can be broadened to benefit as many people as possible, should be developed.



Section 7

Equality and diversity culture for the retention of staff with disabilities

A culture which values individual differences

Bert Massie, in a speech to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Diversity Conference in 2005 pointed out that:

“Many disabled people possess creative skills and innovative approaches to problem solving so far untapped by many employers. We could not survive without those skills.”
(Massie, 2005)

Indeed, this is a sentiment that is echoed across research into organisations, and is something that big businesses like Barclays Bank, and particularly US corporations, are realising and publicising (Cole, 2006; Edwards, 2004; Griffin, 2006; Kim, 2006; Maguire, 2005). Contemporary notions of leadership and organisational culture focus on a consideration of ‘engagement’, which means harnessing the motivation and commitment of all staff in an organisation because of a belief in the importance of, and recognition of, their individual and varied contribution (e.g. Page and Boyle, 2005).

This movement is driven by the business case for organisations to make the fullest use of their human resources in order to stay lean,

efficient and competitive in a way that does not create damaging costs from high levels of stress and increased absenteeism, and reduced performance. Another way of phrasing this challenge, “how can we increase the ‘discretionary effort’ of staff?” That is, the desire of the employee to give their very best and at times go beyond the basic requirements of the role, while ‘maintaining’ their motivation, job satisfaction, and well-being, and thus, not exploiting individuals’ good will.

Private sector organisations now realise that the rewards of high engagement are considerable, with several recent studies showing indisputable links between engagement and various measurements of financial success. For example, a US survey of 24 publicly-listed trading companies with a total of over 250,000 employees conducted over the last five years, found that the stock prices of the eleven highest morale companies increased an average of 19.4%, while those of other companies in the same industries increased by an average of only 8% - a margin of 240% (Sirota Survey Intelligence, 2006). In addition, a Watson Wyatt study (2006) asserts that a company with highly engaged employees typically achieves a financial performance four times greater than a company with poor employee attitudes.

But the challenge of increasing levels of employee engagement is not solely the concern of the private sector. Since the aim of the public and civil service is to serve the needs of an enormous variety of people, there is, therefore, a need for them to understand and harness individual differences, and the commitment of all staff in order to be most efficient in their business of service provision.

Research shows that valuing the individual contributions that all staff (including those with disabilities) can make to an organisation, means that they become more engaged with the organisation have

greater motivation, satisfaction and commitment, and, therefore, become more productive and less likely to leave than if they do not feel valued (e.g. Sirota Survey Intelligence, 2006; Towers Perrin, 2005; Watson Wyatt, 2006).

A culture where adjustments are no big deal

Watson et al's (1996) research found that the culture of organisations that they studied in which staff with disabilities were working in a positive environment and making a valued contribution were those where adjustments were regarded as "no big deal".

These employers adopted the approach of making regular adjustments for non-disabled staff on the basis of whether they increase efficiency, make good business sense and help to retain valued employees. Any adjustments made for staff with disabilities were no different in approach.

Workway (2004) argues that adjustments have already been made to the working environment for non-disabled people, such as the use of gadgets to speed up tasks, and ergonomically-designed furniture is the norm. It is, therefore, nonsensical to regard adjustments for people with disabilities as anything other than what is to be expected.

Doke (2005) reports on the concept of 'inclusive design' which organisations can put in place when they design or renovate workspaces. The starting point is for those involved in the design to ask themselves how it can be broadened to ensure that it helps everyone. Thus, the concept of making reasonable adjustments simply for people who have disabilities is negated, and the culture becomes both more inclusive and more likely to attract and retain them.

Clearly, most organisations will not be in the position of designing new workspaces on a regular basis, but when renovation or design emerges as an issue, inclusive design could be a highly effective approach. What all public bodies can do, however, is to encourage, through training and leadership role-modelling, a culture in which it is usual practice to ask people if there is any way that their work routine, activities or workspace can be made more efficient for them. It is crucial not only to ask staff, but also, remember that it should not be perceived as a big deal, but rather daily practice.

A culture where non-traditional approaches are welcome

Research in organisations suggests that there are a variety of different ways to approach a task, and equally effective people may approach such a task in quite different ways from each other (Linley et al, 2005; Page and Boyle, 2005).

Conroy and Fanagan (2001) argue that some organisations are realising that a diversity of approaches, such as may well come from a workforce made up of staff with disabilities as well as non-disabled staff, is very valuable, as is the willingness to question whether the ways things have always been done are the best. In fact, all aspects of work should be examined, such as working hours and location of the workspace as the nature of work, technology and business changes globally. This would benefit the whole of the workforce and organisation itself in terms of increased efficiency and higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction (DTI, 2005; Equality Authority, 2004).

In order for this to be encouraged, and for changes to be possible, there needs to be a culture in an organisation of embracing possibility rather than rigidly adhering to the way things have

always been done. Leaders in organisations have a very important role to play too in encouraging staff to question the status quo, and to consider and be open-minded and innovative in their thinking about how things could be improved for the better (Brook, 2006).

Through embracing non-traditional approaches, public bodies can ensure that all of their staff (including those with disabilities) work in the most efficient way possible, thus encouraging job satisfaction and reducing the stress caused by inefficient or counterproductive arrangements and processes.

A culture of communication

Research suggests that, as an organisation works towards becoming more inclusive of diversity, people who are in the majority group often feel threatened by the change as they perceive that a change in the distribution of a finite number of jobs may lead to them losing out in some way (Henderson, 1994; Rynes and Rosen, 1995). Therefore, it is regarded as essential that staff in an organisation are made aware of the reasons why it makes good business sense to move to a more diversity-inclusive workplace, and increase the representation of people with disabilities.

This message needs to come from the very top of the organisation, and it needs to be made the responsibility of managers throughout the organisation to publicise it further. It needs to make clear that no particular groups are favoured over others. Without such communication, there is a risk that, within organisations, a culture of resentment could be created among majority group members which would have a negative effect on the recruitment and retention of staff with disabilities.

A culture of inclusion

Researchers in organisations often refer to a concept known as ‘corridor politics’, which is the tendency for staff who are in the ‘in-group’ to have many important meetings and discussions informally around and outside of the workplace, to which the other staff (who are thus regarded as being in the ‘out-group’) are not privy (e.g. Davidson, 1997; Davidson and Cooper, 1992).

Out-group membership in an organisation means not only that a person is less likely to hear about important activities and take part in many decisions that may affect them, but it has also been found to be linked to significantly lower career satisfaction among managers with disabilities (Alban-Metcalfe, 2004a).

Alban-Metcalfe (2004a) found that managers with disabilities were significantly more likely to feel part of the out-group at work and, in particular, were significantly more likely to feel that they miss out on important opportunities such as jobs or special assignments because they are discussed in informal gatherings to which they are not privy. Similarly, Capita and IES (2001) found that UK civil servants with disabilities expressed feelings that their departments were full of non-disabled people who they felt did not value or understand difference.

There are a number of steps that organisations can take to reduce the effects of in-group/out-group status which are important for public bodies to consider if they wish to retain staff with disabilities. The starting point is to move towards creating a more inclusive culture through awareness training of staff at all levels about issues such as: personal barriers that may be between them and staff with disabilities (or vice versa); valuing individual difference; and being inclusive in their activities, language and topics of conversation.

Network groups that staff and organisations set up around a particular issue, such as ethnicity, gender or disability have been found to be effective in circumventing some of the issues that arise from being an out-group member. For example, increased communication from different departments within an organisation between people who would not normally interact can be effective in helping the group members to hear about issues that may not form part of their usual interactions.

Team working and connectedness between staff are important features of a culture which engages people with the organisation (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2003, 2006). Thus minimising barriers to communication is an important feature not only of an inclusive culture, but also needs to be assisted with by leaders at all levels in a public body.

A culture of disability prevention and return-to-work

It has been calculated that 85% of disability among people of working age is acquired (NDA, 2005a) and the chance of acquiring a disability increases with age. It is, therefore, argued as likely that since the workforce is generally ageing in Europe, employers will face increasing numbers of people with disabilities among their workforce (EFILWC, 2004).

The Equality Authority points out that the retention of people who acquire a disability, through encouraging subsequent return to work, is an important focus for public bodies (Equality Authority, 2004). This is not only in order to contribute towards the 3% target, but it makes very sound business sense too.

Research has demonstrated that employee turnover due to disability is an often avoidable waste of skill and experience (Watson et al, 1996), and the cost of replacing an experienced employee can be multiple times their annual salary (Choi, 2001). Furthermore, the retention of key staff with their knowledge and experience is often regarded as the most important organisation-enhancing activity for HR (Right Management, 2006). There are also significant costs to organisations in absenteeism due to sickness or disability through lower morale and lost productivity (EFILWC, 2004), and thus it makes sense to take a prevention approach to disability too.

In relation to return-to-work issues, while there are some variables beyond the control of the employer, such as personal and personality characteristics, a culture which emphasises the importance of rehabilitation can make a significant difference to retention rates in acquired disability (EFILWC, 2004). Factors that need to be emphasised in such a culture include clear policy and direction, understanding the cost of preventable turnover, early intervention, the defined responsibility of specific individuals including the employee's line manager, procedures and flexibility for reintegration such as job-matching and flexible hours, and openness to a multi-disciplinary team approach to reintegration (Calkins, Lui and Wood, 2000; Goldman and Lewis, 2004; Griffiths, 2005; Scardellette, 2003; Stanley, 2003).

It is also suggested that an organisation's policy on return-to-work should be further embedded in the culture of the organisation and in the expectation of the workforce through it being addressed in all employees' inductions (EFIWLC, 2004).

One of the main cultural issues that seems to contribute to prevention of disability as well as to increasing the chances of return-to-work being successful is the minimisation of work-related

stress (e.g. Seebohm and Grove, 2006). Previous sections of this report have discussed the proven benefits of an engaged culture in reducing work-related stress, including leadership styles of valuing and consideration for staff, alongside clearly defined roles and responsibilities and robust performance management.

Key recommendations

Enabling a diverse workforce:

- Organisations should work towards building a culture of valuing individual contributions,
- Organisations should adopt the approach that enquiring about and making accommodations for staff are routine practice and no big deal,
- Leaders should encourage questioning of the ways things have always been done, and whether there are any better approaches that could be adopted,
- Leaders should communicate the benefits of equality and diversity, ensuring that minority groups do not appear to be favoured above the existing majority in the workforce,
- Organisations should try to create a more inclusive culture by helping staff to break down the barriers among them, and encouraging team working and connectedness.

Creating a return-to-work culture:

- Organisations should make new staff aware in their inductions that they have a policy of return-to-work ,
- Responsibilities for helping an employee to return to work should be clearly defined and intervention should begin early,

- Organisations should encourage flexible approaches to be adopted to help employees return to work after they have acquired a disability, or their disability has led to absence,
- Organisations should take actions through their leadership and culture to reduce work-related stress among staff.

Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector



Section 8

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Effective Leadership and Organisational Culture for the Recruitment and Retention of People with Disabilities in the Irish Public Sector



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NDA is the lead state agency on disability issues, providing independent expert advice to Government on policy and practice.