

GUIDANCE on EMPLOYMENT of PEOPLE with DISABILITIES

SCOPE

This policy and guidance applies to the career lifecycle of people working with BT including job design, job advertising, selection, promotion, etc, right through to leaving BT.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Line Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy. BT support to line managers is provided by HR, specialist support in Accenture HR, Able2 (BT's network for people with disabilities) and the Occupational Health Service (OHS). Other support is available from the Disability Rights Commission, the Employers Forum on Disability and the Government's Access to Work scheme.

The BT Global Equality & Diversity Forum (GEDF) are responsible for the consultation, improving knowledge and checking progress elements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 requirements as described within this guidance.

Line Managers

Line managers are responsible for promoting equality of opportunity and diversity and should ensure that people with disabilities are treated fairly and consistently and not discriminated against on the grounds of their disability.

Line Managers must take account of the requirements of the DDA and BT's 'Two Ticks' registration in all decisions regarding the career lifecycle of people working in BT.

So that disabled people are considered for jobs, line managers should:

- ♣ ensure that suitability qualified internal or external disabled people are offered interviews.
- ♣ arrange interviews and tests in venues, which are accessible to disabled people.
- ♣ make test material available in suitable formats for people with visual impairments.
- ♣ ensure that interviewers are aware of their responsibilities under this policy.

When a disabled person is recruited or when an existing employee becomes disabled, managers should:

- ♣ look at what people with disabilities can do rather than at their disability when considering them for jobs;
- ♣ assess job and career prospects flexibly;
- ♣ ensure that people with disabilities on their team are supported as appropriate,
- ♣ use specialist help where required (e.g. Equal Opportunities Adviser, Line of Business Human Resources, Facilities Management);
- ♣ be prepared to be flexible in terms of job design, working patterns changes or job or location, including reallocating duties within the team
- ♣ ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to the workplace or to the equipment and that support workers are provided where appropriate;
- ♣ ensure that special equipment and aids are provided;
- ♣ be flexible about the individual's absence from the workplace for treatment or assessment
- ♣ ensure that where appropriate, handover briefings are provided when changes of managers occur.

The Occupational Health Service (OHS)

The OHS will assess internal and external job applicants on the company's behalf and make a recommendation relating to their suitability for a particular job.

If an employee becomes disabled during their BT career, the OHS will:

- ♣ assess their suitability to continue in their present job
- ♣ make appropriate recommendations about reasonable adjustments. This could include a change of job, changes within the job (including hours, the way the job is done, building access requirements, requirements for furniture and special equipment)
- ♣ provide support and advice for the employee
- ♣ contact external agencies to obtain specialist help if appropriate
- ♣ support the line manager in working with the newly disabled employee

The Equal Opportunities Adviser (EOA)

The EOA will support disabled people and their managers in the considerations outlined above and will act as a link between people with disabilities and external organisations, for example, the Government's JobCentrePlus Disability Services.

The EOA will also act as "case co-ordinator" offering support when alternative duties or other job or workplace adjustments are required.

The Equal Opportunities Advice Centre can be contacted on 0800 780781 (Tel) or 0171 356 9567 (Fax).

Line of Business (LOB) Human Resource (HR)

- ♣ Where appropriate, ensure that redeployees with disabilities are flagged to LOB line managers with vacancies
- ♣ Where necessary, liaise with other LOB HR units to establish redeployment opportunities
- ♣ Work with the line manager and EOAs to ensure that the working environment is suitable.
- ♣ Support the line manager in making reasonable adjustments for the disabled individual
- ♣ With the advice of the EOA, liaise with the relevant Disability Service Team to agree Access to Work funding and provide BT's contribution to any expenditure from a LOB budget. Keep records of this spending for monitoring purposes.

PROCESS

The basic requirements of the DDA and Access to Work Scheme are outlined below but can be found in more detail at <http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/1995050.htm> and the Government's Disability Service 'Help for Disabled People' at <http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/>

'Two Ticks' Commitments

The basic commitments for BT for the Government's 'Two Ticks' registration are:

1. **Guaranteed Job Interviews:** To interview all (internal or external) applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for an advertised job vacancy and consider them on their abilities. (*Line Manager responsibility*)
2. **Consulting Disabled Employees regularly:** To ask disabled employees at least once a year what BT can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities at work. (*GEDF minimal annual responsibility*)
3. **Retaining employees if they become disabled:** To make every effort when employees become disabled to enable them to stay in employment. (*Line Manager responsibility*)
4. **Improving Knowledge:** To take action to ensure that key employees (e.g. senior manager, line managers with vacancies) develop an awareness of disability, so that our commitments can work. (*GEDF responsibility*)
5. **Checking progress and planning ahead:** To review these commitments each year and plan ways to improve on them and to let all BT people know about progress and future plans. (*GEDF responsibility*)

"Valuing Ability" Booklet

This is BT's booklet that provides advice and guidance to managers on the employment of people with disabilities. It is available to all people and can be found at http://humanresources.intra.bt.com/hrbv-bin/hrbv/hr_article.jsp?cont_OID=10189. Additional copies of the booklet can be obtained from the EOA.

The Government's JobCentrePlus "Access to Work Scheme"

This is a scheme to help disabled people gain or maintain employment. Help is available through local JobCentrePlus Disability Service Teams for people whose disability or condition affects the kind of work they can do and is likely to last 12 months or longer.

For people already in employment, providing that the employer pays for the first £300 of adjustments, the scheme will provide up to 80% of all other costs between £300 and £10,000 and 100% of costs over £10,000. This applies over a three year period. For people who are unemployed, the scheme will cover all the costs of their adjustments.

Some examples of the types of help available are:

- ♣ a sign language interpreter or lip-speaker for a meeting or job interview
- ♣ a part-time reader or assistant for a blind or visually impaired person
- ♣ a support worker to give practical help either at or getting to work
- ♣ alterations to buildings or the working environment
- ♣ equipment, or alterations to existing equipment, to meet the particular needs of an individual
- ♣ help with transport (adapting a car or paying for taxi fares where a disabled person is unable to use public transport)

Workforce Monitoring - BT's Global Equality & Diversity Forum

In order that positive action can be taken on behalf of employees with disabilities and to ensure that BT maintains and can increase the number of disabled people in the workforce, regular monitoring is undertaken and reported to the BT Board. An initial company wide monitoring exercise was undertaken in 1997/8 and details provided by employees with disabilities as a result of the exercise were recorded on the personnel system (PeopleSoft).

Details of disability of new recruits are gathered at the time of appointment. This information should be updated as part of each individual's annual personal detail check.

The Employers Forum on Disability - Agenda on Disability

BT is a core member of The Employers Forum on Disability (EFD). This organisation of over 250 employers exists to improve the job prospects of disabled people by making it easier for employers to recruit, retain and develop disabled employees. The EFD has published the following 10 point Action Plan, and along with other member companies, BT is working towards this as the currently established best practice with regard to the employment of disabled people:

1. Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedures Statement

The employment of people with disabilities will form an integral part of all equal opportunities policies and practices.

2. Staff Training and Disability Awareness

The company will take specific steps to raise awareness of disability throughout the organisation, particularly targeting all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process.

3. The Working Environment

The company will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment does not prevent disabled people from taking up positions for which they are suitably qualified.

4. Recruitment

The company will review and develop recruitment procedures, which encourage applications from and the employment of people with disabilities.

5. Career Development

The company will take specific steps to ensure that disabled people have the same opportunity as other staff to develop their full potential within the organisation.

6. Retention, Retraining and Redeployment

Any employees who become disabled will be given the fullest support to maintain or return to a role appropriate to their experience and abilities within the company.

7. Training and Work-Experience

The company will ensure that disabled people are involved in work-experience, training and education/industry links.

8. People with Disabilities in the Wider Community

The company will recognise and respond to disabled people as customers, suppliers, shareholders and members of the community at large.

9. Involvement of People with Disabilities

When implementing the ten points for action the company will encourage the participation of disabled employees to ensure that, wherever possible, employment practices recognise and meet their needs.

10. Monitoring Performance

The company will monitor its progress in implementing the key points. There will be an annual audit of performance reviewed at board level. Achievements and objectives will be published to employees and in the UK annual report.

The Legislative Framework

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

The Disability Discrimination Act replaced the 1944 Disabled Persons Employment Act and abolished both the 3% quota and the registration scheme (green/blue card). In their place, the Act makes it unlawful to discriminate unjustifiably against a person on the grounds of their disability in matters of employment or when providing goods and services to them.

A person is deemed disabled under the DDA if they have a condition, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. (Long term means 12 months or more, or a condition, which is likely to recur.) The Act also includes people with severe disfigurement and those with a clinically well recognised mental illness.

Normal day to day activities are those affecting mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, the ability to lift or carry everyday objects, speech, hearing or eyesight, memory or the ability to concentrate, learn or understand and perception of the risk of physical danger

As well as ensuring that no discrimination occurs in recruitment processes, employers of more than 20 people have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments in order to provide or maintain employment opportunities for disabled people. This could include making changes to the person's workplace, hours of work or the type of work they do.

If an employer does not make such reasonable adjustments, or if a disabled person is unjustifiably treated less favourably than their able-bodied counterparts, then the employer will be considered to have discriminated against the disabled person. The disabled person could take a case against their employer to an Industrial Tribunal and there is no upper limit to the amount of compensation, which they could be awarded.

The examples of reasonable adjustments given in the Act are:

- ♣ making adjustments to premises;
- ♣ allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person;
- ♣ transferring the person to fill an existing vacancy;
- ♣ altering the person's working hours;
- ♣ assigning the person to a different place of work;
- ♣ allowing the person to be absent during working hours for assessment,
- ♣ rehabilitation or treatment;
- ♣ giving the person training;
- ♣ acquiring or modifying equipment;
- ♣ modifying instructions or reference manuals.

The degree to which these adjustments will be considered reasonable will depend on factors such as their cost, the benefit they provide in overcoming the adverse effects of the disability and the ease with which they can be effected.

The Building Regulations 1991 - Approved Document M

This document covers Access and Facilities for Disabled People and requires that for new or substantially reconstructed buildings, reasonable provision should be made:

- a. so that disabled people can reach the principal entrances to the building from the edge of the site curtilage and from car parking within the curtilage;
- b. so that elements of the building do not constitute a hazard for a person with a sight impairment;
- c. for access for disabled people into and within any storey of the building and to any facilities provided to comply with Part M;
- d. so that disabled people can use the building's facilities;
- e. for sanitary accommodation for disabled people;
- f. for suitable accommodation for disabled people in audience or spectator seating;
- g. for aids to communication for people with sight or hearing impairment in auditoria, meeting rooms and reception areas.

FAQs

LINKS

Policy on Employment of People with Disabilities

Valuing Ability 2 at http://humanresources.intra.bt.com/hrbv/bin/hrbv/hr_article.jsp?cont_OID=10189
Equality & Diversity Policy

CONTACTS for ADVICE and HELP

- ♣ Equal Opportunities Specialists: Tel: 0800 731 4747 (Option 1)
- ♣ Equal Opportunities for NI Tel: 028 9021 3260
- ♣ Occupational Health Service: Tel: 0800 800992
- ♣ Local HR Account Manager