

Employers for Disability NI Trustees' Report: April 2022 – March 2023

We provide a high-quality service to members including delivering training and developing disability good practice for employers, managers and disabled employees in relation to employment and service provision.

We would like to thank our members for their ongoing commitment to disability good practice despite all experiencing new challenges. Below is a summary of the year's main activities.

1. Member Support Services

a) Disability Advice Line

This is a core part of the service gained from Employers for Disability NI membership. We have answered many queries from disabled employees, line managers and colleagues about a diverse range of disabilities and issues. As with previous years the common themes included reasonable adjustments in relation to mental health and neurodiversity. Some examples of the queries we have dealt with are below:

- Ongoing support and advice for employee with autism including communication and reasonable adjustments
- Advice on devising training specific to needs
- Supporting person with anxiety to help identify Ras
- Statistics around disability in the workplace
- Advice on supporting employee with dyslexia
- Advice on accessing assessment for employee potentially with autism
- Advice on how to raise disability-related issues with employee
- Advice on performance management issues for disabled employee
- Ongoing support and advice for an autistic employee and his manager including communication and adjustments
- Advice on workplace adjustments for an employee with PTSD
- Advice on adjustments to an interview for a person with a number of neurodiverse conditions
- Advice on managing interpersonal communication difficulties due to underlying disability
- Advice on supporting an employee to overcome disability-related performance issues through adjustments
- Advice on communication adjustments and practice for employee with Autism
- List of assessors who identify neurodiverse conditions
- Sources of support for employee with mental health issues
- Information on supporting employees with anxiety
- Information on supporting employees with dyslexia
- Information on disability hate crime
- Comments and suggestions on a Disability Adjustment Passport
- Software and other adjustments for person with dyslexia
- Supporting employee with anxiety
- Advising employer of adjustments for employee with anxiety
- Advice and support for employer and employee with back condition
- Advice and support for employer and autistic employee

- Advice on disability survey
- Advise on adjustments for employee with hearing loss
- Supporting autistic staff
- Advice for person with ADHD
- Disability Positive language

b) Disability Support and Resolution Service

Employers for Disability NI provides a free, confidential resolution service employing mediation and conciliation approaches. This involves liaising with all key parties (line manager, disabled employee, HR, OH as required), facilitates discussion and advises on how issues may be resolved. This practice is informed by reasonable adjustments, disability good practice and a balanced approach. Depending on the complexity of the issue, this can be done via telephone, email or in face-to-face meetings. The key aim of the service is to support managers, colleagues and disabled employees to avoid disability discrimination and facilitate a problem-solving approach. This is a unique service and is only available to Employers for Disability NI members.

Employers for Disability NI is also available to act as an independent observer during meetings or as an emotional support for the disabled employee. Issues addressed are diverse, however, mental health, disability-related absence, reasonable adjustments and redeployment options remain the most common matters raised. To ensure confidentiality, specific details cannot be divulged.

c) Member Case Review Clinic

Employers for Disability NI offers an intensive review of complex disability-related cases. This “review clinic” approach typically involves one or more half-day sessions with managers and HR personnel involving several disabled employees. The focus is on advice and guidance based on reasonable adjustments and disability good practice.

d) Website

Many news articles, information and links to resources were added throughout the year to the website. This is a valuable source of information to members and others.

e) Member Update Bulletin

Quarterly update bulletins, in line with Board Meetings, have been sent to members to ensure they are aware of our ongoing programme of activities.

f) Member News and Information Update

Members have received regular email updates to inform them about resources, stories of interest, videos, case studies, member activities etc. We receive several requests for further information and assistance following these on an ongoing basis.

g) Jobs Bulletin Board

Many vacancies have been added and circulated to disability organisations over the past year. This is one of the most popular web pages on our website. We have extended our database of disability contacts who are notified each time the webpage is updated and we intend to develop and promote this service further with our members.

h) CBT Service

Several clients have benefitted from this service in the past year via Zoom and face-to-face. This is offered to members, project participants and others at a discounted rate.

i) Professional Services' Discounts

Substantial discounts for members are available for a number of products/services, including disability-related videos provided by Skillboosters, autism training by Specialistern and dyslexia products by TextHelp.

j) Disability Positive Accreditation

This initiative, after much hard work and a pilot project, was launched in June 2022. We are very pleased with the uptake to date and hope to promote this further in the future to both members and non-members.

2. Events

Training has continued to be a key focus for serving members and we have invested a lot of time and resources in designing and delivering up-to-date, tailored sessions. Evaluations have been most positive and work is ongoing to continually improve our sessions. These are delivered via Zoom, Teams and face-to-face.

- 5 April, **free member event**, Hidden Disability, 1.5 hrs
- 7 April, BBC, Being a Disability Positive Manager, 1.5 hrs
- 3 May, COPNI, Hidden Disability, 1.5 hrs
- 17 May, HIS Carers, Stress Less, 1.5 hrs Evening Zoom
- 20 May, HIS Carers, Stress Less, 3 hrs
- 24 May, WHSCT, Disability Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 25 May, Executive Office (NICS), Neurodiversity, ½ hr
- 24 June and 5 July, QUB, Neurodiversity, 1.5 hrs (online)
- 28 June, Police Ombudsman, Neurodiversity, 1.5 hrs (online)
- 22, 24 and 26 August, NI Public Services Ombudsman, Disability Awareness (face to face)
- 30 August, Autism Awareness, Cambridge House School (face to face)
- 5 September, Police Ombudsman for NI, Neurodiversity Awareness
- Ongoing support and advice for an autistic employee and his manager including communication and adjustments
- Advice on guaranteed interview, essential v non-essential criteria and internal appointments
- Guidance on assessing genuine H&S risk and on seeking expert advice for person with hearing loss
- 15 September, QUB, Autism Awareness (online)
- 16 September and 29 November, Western HSC Trust, Disability Awareness (face to face)
- 20 September, Southern HSC Trust, Disability Awareness (online)
- 22 September, Education Authority, Supporting Employees' Mental Health (online)
- 26 September, Invest NI, Disability Positive Training and Accreditation for employees (online)
- 27 September (Autism), 11 October (AD(H)D and Dyspraxia), 25 October (Dyslexia and Dyscalculia), 8 November (Sight Loss), 22 November (Hidden/Non-visible Disability), 6 December (Stress Less), NICS (online)
- 5 October, Education Authority, Hidden/Non-visibility Disability Awareness (online)
- 21 October, NILGOS, Disability Awareness (face to face)
- 3 November, UU, Hearing Loss Awareness (online)
- 8 November, UU, Hidden/Non-visibility Disability Awareness (online)
- 10 November, UU, Neurodiversity Awareness (Autism and AD(H)D) (online)

- 17 November, UU, Neurodiversity Awareness (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia) (online)
- 17 November, GLS NI, disability Awareness (face to face)
- 30 November, UU, Disability Awareness (face to face)
- 2 December, AGM, ECNI, Lessons from DDA Caselaw
- 3 December, NICS staff disability network - sharing good practice 1.5hrs
- 7 December, UU, Hearing Loss, 1.5hrs
- 7 December, NICS, 1.5hrs
- 8 December, BHSCT, Stress Less, 1.5hrs
- 18 January, NICS, Mental Health Awareness, 1.5hrs
- 25 January, NICS, Physical Disability, 1.5hrs
- 1 February, NICS, Hidden Disability, 1.5 hrs
- 8 February, NICS, Hearing Loss, 1.5 hrs
- 10 February, WHSCT, Disability Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 14 February, NICS Hearing Loss
- 15 February, NICS, Sleep Well for Life, 1.5 hrs
- 21 February, NICS, Managers Managing Mental Health
- 21 February, WHSCT, Disability Awareness
- 23 February, Mid-Ulster, Learning Disability
- 28 February, NIHE, Hidden
- 7 March, NICS, ADD, ADHD, Dyspraxia
- 9 March, Mid-Ulster, Disability Positive Recruitment
- 9 March, NIHE, Reasonable Adjustments for Service Users
- 14 March, NICS, Dyslexia and Dyscalculia
- 14 March, NIHE Neurodiversity
- 22, 23, 24 March, Aware, second assessed delivery
- 28 March, NIHE, Learning Disability and employment opportunities provision

Staff Training Attended

- MHFA – 2 days
- MHFA T4T – 3 days
- ADUK, Assistance Dogs webinar
- Introduction to Safeguarding
- EC Mental Health Charter & Good Practice
- Aware Mood Matters
- How Thoughts Trap Us, Dr Rick Hanson
- Irene Lyon Summer School, The Nervous System
- 2 x half-day ACE (Playboard, Level 1 + Level 2)
- Half-day Lego-based therapy workshop
- MHFA Zoom - shadow for training purposes
- Irene Lyon Anxiety Workshop
- Understanding eating disorders and developing communication skills

Mental Health First Aid

Staff have been working towards becoming accredited MHFA trainers. This has

required a huge investment in time and effort by staff. Two mentored, assessed deliveries have taken place to date, with a third and final such delivery planned for April 2023, in line with PHA guidelines. Following this, we will offer this training for members.

Staff participation in members' working groups

- NICS Diversity Working Group (ongoing membership)
- Education Authority Stakeholders' Group (ongoing membership)
- NI Civil Service Disability Working Group
- Advisory panel of Harkin Summit

3. Partnership Working

Partnership with Head Injury Support (National Lottery Community Fund Project):

Head Injury Support invited Employers for Disability NI to be a partner in a funding application to the National Lottery Community Fund for a two-year project supporting the mental health of head injury survivors and carers. This was successful and will bring in funding of approximately £7,000 per annum. After much work putting the project together and securing funding, we are delighted that the project was launched with carers and survivors on 31 March 2022. Work will be ongoing for a two-year period.

Leonard Cheshire Grad Employ Programme

The final part of this programme took place this year involving consultation calls with employers who participated on this programme. This was a useful and practical way to finalise the work of this project.

4. Administrative Matters

Fundraising Initiatives

We have continued seeking funds from external sources and partnerships to ensure sustainability.

We have engaged a marketing assistant, Kimberley O'Hare, on a freelance basis to undertake some key pieces of work, with a budget of £2,000 including all costs. Kim looked at the marketing of our services, and supported us in making the most of our website and promoting events.

Board Membership

We are delighted to welcome Emma Patterson, BBC to board membership.

Membership

We were pleased to welcome Labour Relations Agency, North West Regional College and Southern Health & Social Care Trust to membership this year.

