Workplace Equality:
North East Scotland

Diversity & Wellbeing Toolkit
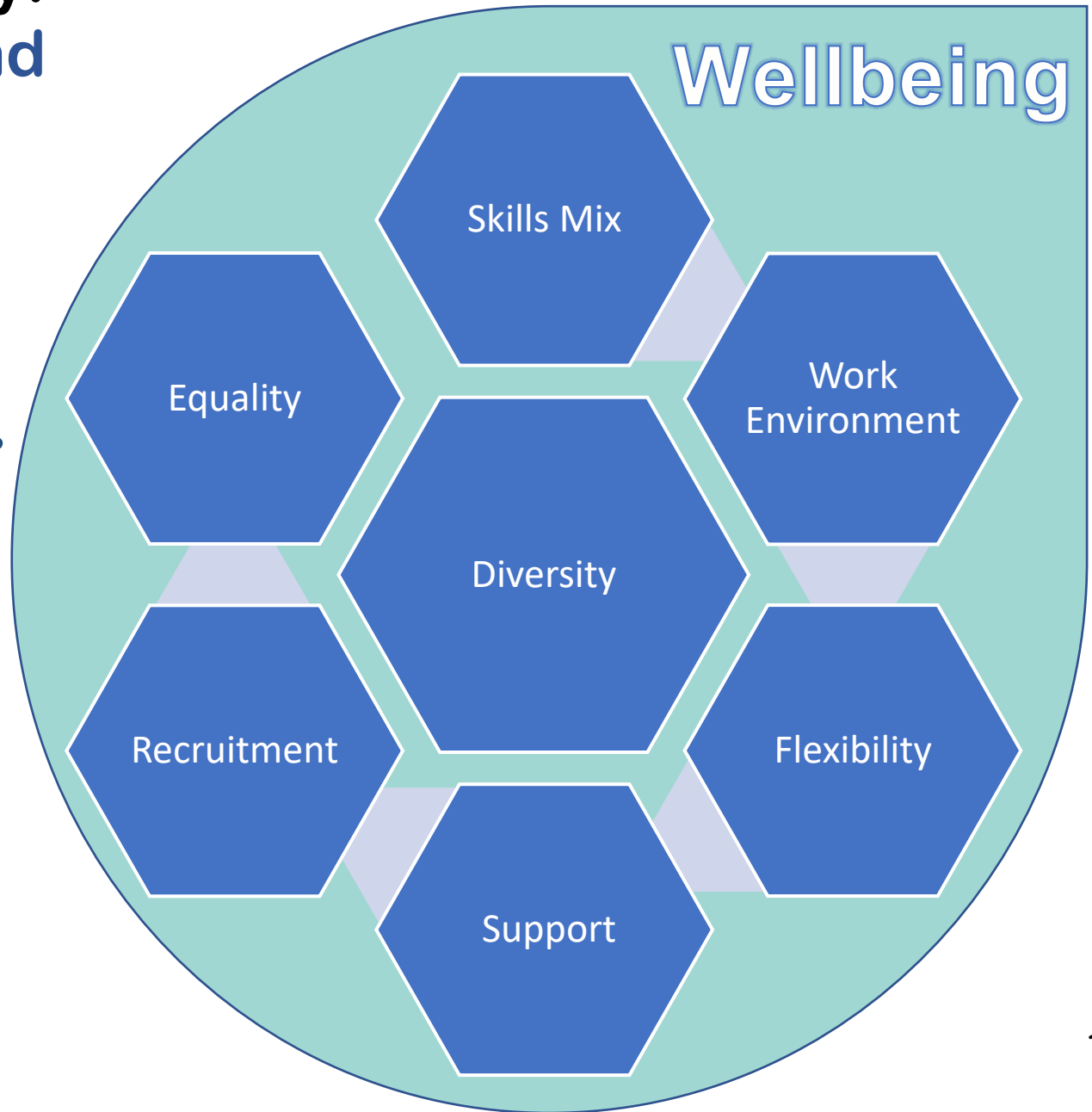
Wellbeing

Skills Mix

Equality

Work Environment

Diversity

Recruitment

Flexibility

Support

Contents

Introduction:

This is a practical guide to raising and improving awareness of diversity in the workplace.

This includes:

- Areas to be aware of, and take action on, in relation to diversity in your workforce
- Ways to be sure your workplace is inclusive
- Ways to positively support employee wellbeing
- The positive effects of diversity on your workplace
- Challenges and ways to approach them for the best chance of success
- Adapting to home working and other changes to existing workplace arrangements

This resource is here to help you. It can add to your understanding without taking you away from focussing on the core business.

Did You Know?

In Scotland the employment rate for disabled people is 45.4%

Compared to 81.2% of non-disabled people

Fairer Scotland Dec 2018

In each section we have some "how are you doing" questions

This helps check where you are at and think about what you need to work on and plan for

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What we mean by diversity

Diversity covers a number of characteristics including those with legal protection against discrimination age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity

Equality Act 2010

A diverse workforce will have a mix of employees with different characteristics, level of education and backgrounds. The employer needs to support people to feel equal and valued, as well as making sure you are complying with the law. This has important benefits for your business as well as for your workforce. It can expand the range of viewpoints, skills and experiences.

In out toolkit we will be paying particular attention to the issues around increasing diversity around disability and long-term health conditions.

How are you doing?

"What do we already do to make people from diverse backgrounds feel welcome?

How good is our awareness of discrimination, and any potential barriers to employment?

How do we ask our workers about this in a way that encourages honest and positive feedback?

Wellbeing

Looking after employee wellbeing is increasingly understood as being an area that makes good business sense. One tool you can use in Scotland is The Healthy Working Lives website, which has information and an award programme. It gives employers access to free support to look at what they have in place, with these aims:

- To have a healthier, more motivated and productive workforce
- Reduce absence rates and support employees in work and returning to work
- Reduce accidents, incidents and work-related ill health
- Enhance your reputation and increase your profile
- Contribute to the health of the wider community.

https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/award-programme/Pages/what-is-the-award.aspx

The issue of Mental Health in the workplace has gained growing attention with campaigns to raise awareness and reduce stigma. Along with disabilities, many people still do not feel safe to declare their disability or Mental Health problems for fearing of being discriminated against.

Mental Health

With 1 in 4 Scots having a Mental Health problem, there is a real chance you have staff who are facing this issue

https://www.samh.org.uk/documents/SAMH_How_To_Be_Mentally_Healthy_At_Work_1.pdf

Diversity and your skills mix

You need employees who have the relevant experience, skills, education as well as the ability to do the job. This will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and overall quality of what your business offers.

Options that work:

Be open to discussing diversity – you don't have to have all the answers. Work on this together with your team. What allows people with different perspectives and lived experience to join or stay in the workplace?

You may carry out a skills and personality types inventory when looking at the make-up of a team, and it is important to recognise you benefit from a variety of opinions, (the person who will check the details will not always be the person with all the new ideas). There are many variations, here is a link to the Colour Works Insights Discovery model, which gives a good starting point for thinking about this

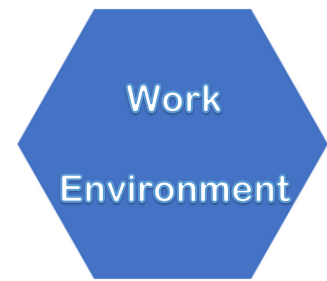https://www.thecolourworks.com/insights-discovery-colour-types-guide/

How are you doing?

What is your business aiming to achieve?

How does diversity affect the skill mix?

What is your first step?

What skills do you have, and which ones are you looking for?

Practical things to consider in your work environment

We can develop some compromises for work environments that are not ideal. A good starting point is to listen to employees' experiences and get someone with a fresh pair of eyes and a knowledge of disability, diversity and inclusion to explore your workplace (physically and online), focusing on reducing any barriers and increasing inclusion.

Do you know about reasonable adjustments –

As an employer, you might have to make adjustments to ensure someone with disabilities, physical or mental health condition aren't substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. The Equality Act 2010 calls this "reasonable adjustments". https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers

Many things that are looked at also benefit the work environment for other employees, for example flexible working.

How Are You doing?

Complexity often adds cost and time: how can you simplify? How do employees share their ideas? How do you ensure these are considered and taken forward? Can staff rate what has improved and what would improve the quality of their work environment? See page 15 -17 for a practical approach to this.

What are the barriers to efficiency in terms of layout, facilities for meetings / calls, quiet zones to aid concentration (dependent on your business type). Are there physical barriers to access, is the lighting good enough to avoid eye strain?
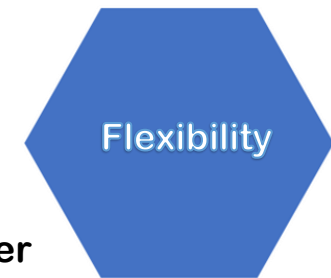
Ways to improve flexible workplace options

Some options can include flexible shift times to allow for travel sharing or to fit with other needs such as childcare. Exploring ways to meet the business need through understanding what works for individuals and how to get the best from them. This can include flexible breaks to support your mental and physical wellbeing.

What can be different? Just because it hasn't been done, don't assume flexibility will have a negative effect on productivity. When well managed it can have the opposite effect, staff feel supported and have more time and energy to contribute to the job. The world has had to adapt to working from home in many cases, what have you learned from this experience? How do you help employees to focus on outcomes and have permission to try what might work better?

CIPD has a questionnaire for some basic starting points around homeworking

https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/homeworking-questionnaire

Flexibility

Home working

In April 2020 44% of the Scottish Workforce carried out some work from home

How Are You Doing?

List all the types of flexible working options you have considered in your workplace. Are there any areas that you think are missing? Can you ask employees what other types of flexibility would help them with their job?
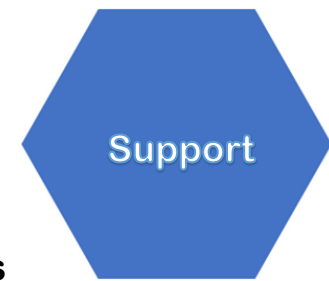
Direct support to build confidence, resilience and wellbeing

Workplaces naturally have deadlines, competing demands and limited resources. If this isn't managed well, workplace stress can impact negatively on employee physical and mental health.

How do you strike a balance between getting business results and looking after your team?

Access to Work is a government scheme which can support reasonable adjustments https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Getting to work- Whether it is supporting car share schemes, cycle to work (which includes e-bikes now) can make transport more accessible. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cycle-to-work-scheme

Support doesn't always have to come from management – support from other team members (sometimes called peer support) is another useful way of having capacity to listen, support and improve as you carry out the work. It's important to create a space to acknowledge support and any improvements.

Link to a short-animated video about Access To Work https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soU7WyI4S6A&t

How Are You Doing?

How do you support each other – planned or unplanned discussion?

How do you share what works with the rest of the team?

How do you check out with people where would they go if they needed support and what would make it work for them?

This page has some links to current resources that can help

ACAS has a range of resources that can help you identify steps to take in the current climate. We can help you work through some of these practical steps.

https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus

In particular there is a focus on helping employees maintain their **Mental Health**. What are you doing to encourage discussion and ideas around areas people may be struggling with?

https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus-mental-health

Returning to the workplace. This can include self-management, advice and guidance when working from home, financial worries and anxiety about transitioning out of lockdown.

https://www.acas.org.uk/working-safely-coronavirus/returning-to-the-workplace

This takes you through a toolkit about preventing **workplace stress**

https://www.hse.gov.uk/STRESS/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf

Some tools around **resilience** and **future planning**.

https://www.bgateway.com/resources/covid-19-business-resilience-and-the-future-of-work

Advice around **reasonable adjustments** and **rights**.

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-employers-reasonable-adjustments-employees

Recruitment

How you approach recruitment? Where do you advertise? How you word the role description and advert has a big effect on how well you reach different parts of the community. The interview process also impacts on diversity. Have you thought about issues around how the interview is explained and structured? This can make a difference to how candidates perform, and demonstrate their skills in an actual work environment. These can all impact on your reputation as an employer and affect the diversity of who you employ.

Equality of opportunities can be affected by both conscious or unconscious bias including age, race, disability, background, gender and education. Here is the ACAS definition and some tools

https://archive.acas.org.uk/unconsciousbias

Value Based Recruitment

Focusing on the wider qualities of the candidate, in addition to their skills and experience in your field

https://ff.iriss.org.uk/steps/values-based-recruitment

How Are You Doing?

Do you openly welcome applications from a wide range of backgrounds?

Do you offer the option for job sharing and flexible working, and share examples of success?

Do you offer paper or video-based alternatives to online recruitment? How accessible is your overall process?

Who are you not reaching, how do you know? Do you collect statistics about diversity?

Practical Ways to Support Increased Equality in Your Business

In business it can be a challenge to change things to fit different people's needs. If you word things in a way that encourages people to ask questions and seek help, that really helps. A lot of the time people will come up with many solutions themselves, and all they need is permission to do things slightly differently.

It's important to give people the chance to explore any reasonable adjustments to ensure they have a level playing field. (Equality vs equity) an example of this can be if a member of staff has a bladder problem and has to go for more frequent bathroom breaks. If they are able to go when they need to rather than having a set amount that reduces and anxiety and means they can concentrate on their job, not worrying about getting into trouble. Below is a Government guide to employing people with health conditions

Over 7.7 million people of working age in the UK are disabled or have a health condition

Gov.UK 2020

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions

How Are You Doing?

Do you have the chance to tailor someone's induction to take account of their learning style and any supports they need?

Are you clear about routes for support and funding which can help people into employment, or support them to remain in employment? Access To Work is a useful service, supporting reasonable adjustments and often funding additional support.

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What is your workplace culture around learning and improvement?

Kaizen is a continuous improvement process which is recognised as creating a culture where employees can contribute to problem solving and enable the implementation of quick improvements. This has proved effective for improving productivity, safety, reducing waste and generating improvements that also benefit the workforce. From a diversity perspective, it allows people a space to raise things that would improve their productivity and confidence. Here is a link to the key principles https://www.kaizen.com/what-is-kaizen.html

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Start Here

We need everyone's help to improve. This means trusting each other and sharing our worries, our ideas and a willingness to work on things together.

If we start by asking these questions:

What went well? / even better if?

"What went well?" encourages us to capture and share things that we would want to replicate and not leave to chance. If there are processes that are wasteful or get in the way for inclusive ways of working this will help people share their ideas.

What will it take?

"Even better if?" is a way to share learning about something that we could improve on, something that resulted in a near miss, a situation that we have identified a better solution for if we change our practice or process. The important thing is that neither of these statements are biased towards blame. This allows employees who might not feel confident to contribute to feel engaged.

Ask

Ask staff and customers regularly –

- What do you like that you want to see more of?
- What could be improved?
- What would that look like?
- How will we know?

Instead of asking why it isn't happening now, ask:

What is the issue, can I take action, do I need resources or permission, or training?

Is it a one off or a recurring issue? What other help do you need to make it happen?

Staff record things as they come up and approach management if it is urgent. If there are things you can take forward yourself, do it. This also provides a record of decision making and embeds active problem solving and joint accountability. Otherwise managers will check in with plans in each department on an agreed regular basis.

Review regularly if we feel this process is making a difference, if not we can improve it together. The aim is for this not to be another layer of things to do but an active way of checking if what we do is making a difference consistently.

How this approach impacts on your employees' equality experience is that there is reduced pressure on managers to be solely responsible for spotting and acting proactively on every issue (which includes diversity). By creating a bottom up systematic response that complements existing quality improvement and management mutual confidence to contribute is greatly improved.

People have explicit permission to share ideas and suggest solutions. Often people may feel this is already how you feel you are working, this allows you to check to what extent that is happening. Is it consistent across all areas of work?

For example: an employee might identify an area where a change of company process will have an impact on the inclusiveness, diversity and equality. For example, staggered working times that allow car sharing can benefit people with a disability travelling with family members, but also parents with childcare. Another example is the addition of lights to smoke alarms which can benefit people with hearing impairments and also others in quieter areas of the building.

Innovation and joint problem solving
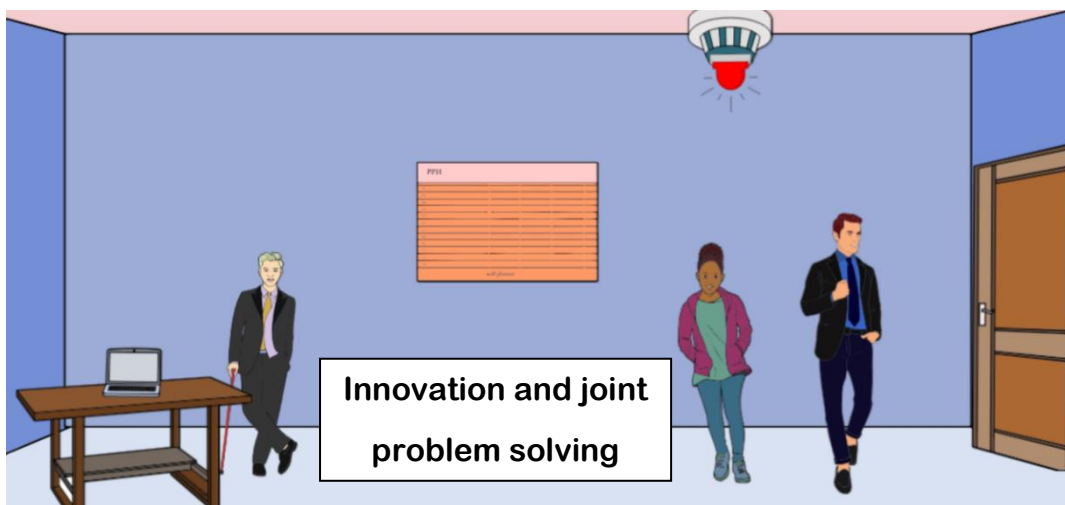
Key to the success of this is follow up. If there is acknowledgement of growth / improvement and the source it came from, the rest of this process becomes self-sustaining. Things need to stay on the list until they are evaluated for action. Where an employee's idea contributes to an improvement, there should be recognition of that to encourage them to do it again and encourage others to see how valuable it is.

Expectations – many people with disabilities and long-term health conditions worry that people will not see them as capable. This can in turn lower expectations and make us doubt our capability to learn and cope. Negative stereotypes of people being seen as a burden can create the urge for people to hide their disability. Fear is a powerful emotion.

This can prevent people from applying and may also get in the way of recruiting people from diverse backgrounds.

The next page has a format for recording ideas and actions, you may wish to adapt it for your workplace:

Date	What's working? What could be improved?	Idea/ Suggestion for change What would a solution look like?	Making it Happen What can you do? What help do you need?	Did it happen? Did it make a difference? What did we learn?

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Evaluating Your Approach to Diversity

What areas of diversity can you name?

↓

Check them against the Equality Act, did you miss any?

↓

For each of the groups identified list some general barriers to employment

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Now think about your own business, are any of those barriers present?

How does this make you feel?

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Would you feel confident asking staff to share their thoughts and experiences?

↓

What would help that to feel safe?

↓

How can you share how feedback has improved diversity and equality in your workplace?

↓

How do you make that part of the everyday, so it doesn't get forgotten?

Sharing the learning

Do you have ways to capture stories of what helped individuals?

Finding out what it takes for someone to feel safe and positive is a huge step in establishing a trusting Employer / Employee relationship.

See videos of these examples on Grampian Opportunities Website
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZOxYNcQaBlAfCadWisKxXg

One person's story –

- Finding out about a role – this began by support to connect to an employment training scheme.
- Key features included the chance to get support to attend an interview, gradual building up experiences, the ability to ask questions and feel capable.
- Over time this resulted in improved skills and confidence, moving on to take on different roles and additional hours.
- This has created a long-term loyalty to the employer, reducing turnover and the employer has recognised the value of a diverse workforce, also employing someone else who the original employee recommended.
- This word of mouth also helps the brand.

One page profile for

....

Put your photo here

What people like and admire about me at work

This can include how I support others, how I approach problems and generate ideas.
My work ethic and willingness to help out.
This should be passed to colleagues to complete and then a summary is included here. It allows us to see what others value in our approach.

What's important to me at work

This is a space where you get to say what works for you, whether that is a chance to explore a topic in discussion or time to reflect on it on your own.

We don't always let colleagues know what is important to us, if we know each other better it supports our wellbeing and can impact on our concentration and fit with our role within a team

How to support me at work

What is helpful to one person is not helpful to other people, for example for some people the chance to offload and debrief quickly.

If I am not confident to join in group discussions, it may be the chance to ask me individually, or allow me to put my thoughts in writing

One Page Profile

This is a useful tool for understanding yourself and others within your team.

Quite often we are so busy with the work that we don't take the time to understand how to get the best from each other and support diversity and wellbeing.

This also creates a positive workplace culture which can reduce stress and make employees more likely to stay without having an impact on your day to day work focus.

More About Us

Linda Singer: A qualified Occupational Therapist and Manager of Grampian Opportunities (GO) with extensive experience working in community settings.

GO has a focus on inclusion and employability for all. The majority of staff and volunteers at GO have personal experience of disability and long-term conditions which adds to the knowledge and experience available to help others.

GO first researched what helps people stay in employment in 2009. The key finding identified mentoring for the employee, colleagues and line managers was an effective way forward.

Managing a Service User reference group during the implementation of Self Directed Support. Working at Grampian Opportunities since 2000, Linda has focused on inclusion and employability for all. She has specialist knowledge of Autism, is the winner of the AVA award in 2018. 90% of the team at Grampian Opportunities have long-term health conditions or disabilities.

True North
Building Resilience Through
Coaching and Mentoring
in the Workplace

Tricia McLean: Project Manager/Coordinator with extensive private sector experience and voluntary sector experience. 14 years Voluntary sector experience includes initial Mentoring Coordinators role leading, and supporting the development of a peer support and mentoring service "New Explorations". Coordinating and facilitating the involvement of a diverse group of volunteers with disabilities long term conditions and mental health within the development of the volunteer led project.

Current role Senior Coordinator leading on the Moving Forward Together project – which connects people with long term conditions to information, learning, and skills and support to promote the opportunity to live life to the full.

Specialism within employability, passionate about equal opportunities within employment. Self manages own long-term conditions and has received Access to Work support within the work place since 2009. Uses adaptive technology within the workplace. Mentors other through application process and has experience of supporting employers to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace and access appropriate information/support. Professional coach/mentor 2013 completed ILM Level 5 Diploma for Professional Management Coaches and Mentors. Provide external Coaching and Mentoring through self-employed business since 2016.

Positively Minty

Alastair Minty: Self Employed Independent Development Work, Consultancy and Training.

Focusing on areas including inclusion, risk enablement, management of change and sustainability.

Over 30 years' experience of working with people with disabilities, Mental Health issues and substance misuse across a variety of settings. Have been involved in various transformational change programmes including Leading To Deliver, setting up a Public Social Partnership, and Community Led Support programmes through the National Development Team for Inclusion.

Part of the team which brought Project Search to Aberdeen, where it won the award for Upcoming Site of the year in Europe with 98% of graduates gaining full time paid employment in year one.

Currently also is a workplace mentor for someone with Autism through Access to Work.

Qualifications - Post Graduate Certificate In Social Services Leadership, Bachelor of Arts Degree in Community Care and Learning Disabilities, Registered Nurse (Learning Disabilities).

Other Resources

Easy Read Version Overview of Access to Work

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-get-help-at-work-if-youre-disabled-or-have-a-health-condition-access-to-work/get-help-from-access-to-work-easy-read

The following two links provide more detailed info and include fact sheets for employers and one for customers.

Employers

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers/access-to-work-factsheet-for-employers

Customers

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet

Disabled workers post lockdown -

https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/covid-19/back-to-business-considerations-for-employers-supporting-disabled-employees-post-lockdown/

Carers resource

http://www.carerpositive.org/ **a valuable resource for carers which can be useful for employees with caring responsibilities**