

Disability

Legislation and social policy are in place to support disabled people's employment. Yet this minority group continues to face discrimination and barriers in the workplace. Understanding the factors that contribute to disability discrimination is necessary as are steps to improve equity and inclusion.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities addresses protection against workplace disability discrimination. In the UK, the Equality Act (2010) lists disability as a protected characteristic. Yet despite these interventions, the disabled are at risk of economic exclusion. Besides affecting the economic outcomes of disabled individuals, such discrimination also results in societal costs.

As the nature of disability varies widely between individuals, so its effects

in terms of labour market exclusion and discrimination within employment also vary. As such it is difficult to assess the employment opportunities available to the disabled, their participation in the labour market, and implications for their pay and career progression.

THE BUSINESS CASE & SOCIAL JUSTICE ARGUMENTS

The business case sets forth the advantages of employing diverse individuals. This can bring competitive advantage through access to a wider talent pool, employees who mirror their customers, and multiple capabilities and perspectives.

However, given the wide range of disabilities that may be represented, a clear customer advantage may be less obvious. Also if disabled minorities are to be integrated into the workforce, not only will barriers to their employment need to be removed but economic value demonstrated.

The provision of adjustments and interventions necessary for full workforce inclusion by disabled people may be hard to justify on cost grounds and in terms of practicality. As such, the fickle nature of the business case argument may work against the employment of those with disabilities.

Notwithstanding this, social justice provides a clear basis for inclusion of this minority group. Commitment to social justice forms a strong part of the social ESG (environmental, social and governance) pillar and demonstrates excellent corporate social responsibility (CSR) credentials.

ERADICATING STEREOTYPING

Disabled people may be negatively stereotyped resulting in their qualifications being undervalued or discounted. Attention must be paid within the

recruitment and selection process to eradicate such stereotyping. Training those involved in these processes is crucial for increasing access to employment opportunities by disabled people.

Even if the disabled gain access to employment, subtle workplace prejudice must also be addressed if they are to gain an equal share of career opportunities. For example, extra responsibilities and training may, wrongly, not be offered to disabled employees by well-meaning line managers who try to protect them from additional pressures.

GLOBAL MOBILITY IMPLICATIONS

In the context of international mobility, policy design might provide funding for accessibility needs. These might include ensuring accessible workplaces and living accommodation for assignees/family members. Access to appropriate medical care for those with particular health conditions should also be addressed.

Supporting mental health issues can include the provision of counselling and employee assistance programmes. Mental health can be promoted through addressing work-life balance.

For assignees with children requiring special needs education, policy can provide specialist school search assistance and educational provision in specialist schools.

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