It is widely reported that a significant proportion of the working age population are currently living with a disability. These guidelines are intended to support you in using our tests, ensuring you have the information and guidance you need to make sure that applicants with disabilities are treated fairly as part of the assessment process.

Employers have a responsibility to ensure they have a testing policy that includes how to work with disabled people. They need to comply with any country-specific legislation on the fair treatment of people with disabilities. Employers should also recognise that by creating unnecessary barriers for someone with a disability or treating them unfairly, they are potentially missing out on a group of talented potential employees with a great deal to offer the organisation.

Whilst psychometric tests and assessments are renowned for being one of the most objective and fair ways to assess someone’s suitability for a job, many worry that they are inappropriate for people with disabilities. These guidelines help to overcome these concerns so that disabled people can be treated in the same fair and objective way as their non-disabled peers. They do not serve as a step-by-step guide for dealing with all types of disability as there are so many forms that disability can take and the same condition can affect different people in different ways.

The British Psychological Society’s Psychological Testing Centre states: “…it is imperative that the [test] user balances proper standardised test administration with the need for effective assessment of someone with a disability and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995)\(^1\). This requires knowledge of relevant disability issues, knowledge of testing, appropriate testing policy, procedures and processes and a flexible approach.” Whilst this is specific to the UK, other countries have their own disability legislation to similar effect.

**Equality Act 2010**

In October 2010, the Equality Act came into effect. The Act harmonises and replaces previous legislation such as the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It aims to protect disabled people and prevent discrimination against those with a disability, and offers consistent advice for employers striving to create a fair workplace and comply with the law. The Act covers both direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination refers to when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is neutral on the face of it, but its impact particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, unless the person applying the provision can justify it as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Ultimately, if tested, it will be for a court of law or tribunal to determine what is justifiable. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) states that: “It is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people on the grounds of their disability, unless the employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.”

\(^1\) Now replaced by the Equality Act 2010
workers because of a physical or mental disability or fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a worker with a disability. Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is classified as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Day-to-day activities include things such as using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport.

Under this act, a person is considered to have a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.”

The act means that “employers must make reasonable adjustments in the recruitment and employment of disabled people. This can include, for example, adjustments to recruitment and selection procedures, to terms and conditions of employment, to working arrangements and physical changes to the premises or equipment.” (www.acas.org.uk)

With this in mind these guidelines are intended to help you to understand what your responsibilities are as a test user and how you can achieve compliance with the law in relation to testing. The law is designed so that employers are mandated to make ‘reasonable changes’ to accommodate people with disabilities. Failure to make such adjustments could lead to legal action being taken against your organisation and could also exclude large pools of talented people. This is intended to offer a quick guide to the law and your responsibilities within it; it is not designed to be an authoritative statement of the law.

Talent Q and online testing

Our psychometric tests have been designed for online delivery; the dynamic scoring approaches used within the tests require computer-based administration. The tests can be delivered in an unsupervised environment, meaning that test takers can complete them at a time and location convenient to them. Use of the Internet for testing can provide a much more convenient medium for many disabled people in a number of ways. For example, for those people who have difficulty hearing, the fact that they read all of the instructions themselves means that they won’t encounter the difficulties they may usually encounter in a supervised, paper-and-pencil based testing session. Being allowed to take the tests in the comfort of one’s own home with access to appropriate technology can make test taking easier for those who find a standard computer difficult to use without modification. For less physically mobile candidates, not having to travel to a specific location for testing can also reduce the stresses involved.

Some employers may prefer to use Talent Q tests in a supervised environment and may expect disabled candidates to attend; however, it would be a reasonable adjustment to allow a disabled candidate to take the tests remotely if required. If company policy is to test in a supervised environment, successful candidates could be asked to complete a verification test later on in the process, for example, when attending an interview or assessment centre, if it was felt appropriate.
General considerations

- Within any recruitment process it is important to give all candidates the opportunity to inform you about any disability or special needs they may have so that you can make the necessary adjustments/arrangements for them. This is best included early on in the process so that you can start planning any adjustments that need making, such as choice of building to allow access, tests to be used, assessment centre exercises, etc. This could mean adding a statement on an application form such as “As part of the selection process for this job, candidates will be asked to complete a number of online psychometric tests. This will require the use of a computer and to be able to read passages of text and interpret numerical tables. If you have any special requirements you would like us to accommodate please outline them below.” As many people with disabilities often feel unsure about whether to disclose their condition it is important to make it clear why you are asking for this information.

- People with disabilities are not simply one group of people with the same requirements. Even those people with the same disability may be affected by it in different ways. It is vitally important for employers to be aware of this and to consider every applicant with a disability on an individual basis. Whilst asking people whether they have a disability or any special requirements is a good first step, the important thing is to respond to each one uniquely. Having an inflexible policy for ‘dyslexic candidates’ or for ‘candidates with visual disabilities’, for example, will not be effective in providing appropriate adjustments based on individual requirements. Having some knowledge of specific areas is of course useful but it is not necessary to have a thorough understanding, or even a policy, of all possible areas of disability that may affect someone’s ability to complete a test. What’s more important is having the right dialogue with the candidate, supported by a diagnostic report, to ensure you can respond to their needs.

- When inviting candidates to complete an assessment, they should be given the full details of what is expected of them (this extends to all exercises that form part of their assessment). By being clear about the specifics of each assessment, candidates can make a decision about whether they are likely to need any adjustments. Within Talent Q Assessment Systems there is a default email template that includes a point about special requirements: this is often a useful starting point for many clients.

- When a candidate informs you about a disability it is important to speak to them about the kinds of adjustments that are usually made for them and talk through the entire selection process with them (not just the tests), as there may be other areas where reasonable accommodations need to be made. They live with their disability on a daily basis and are therefore best placed to advise on what adjustments they need. As a qualified test user it is your responsibility to make adjustments to the tests themselves or the room in which the tests will be taken. However, the considerations you are required to make may be much wider, for example, ensuring there is somewhere for a less mobile candidate to park or changing the layout of furniture in the office to ensure a wheelchair user has the space to get to the testing room.

- Give the candidate access to the practice questions early on in the overall selection process so that they can judge for themselves whether they feel any extra modifications need to be made, and then discuss with them what they need to be. Candidates with disabilities can be set up with the relevant assessments and asked to work through the practice questions in Talent Q Assessment Systems to make this judgment. They can also access the candidate support site to try our practice assessments (www.trytalentq.com). This will enable them to check whether any hardware or software that they usually use on a computer can be applied to the tests and will also give them a better understanding of what they will be required to do.

- It is also important to think about the resulting adjustments that may need to be made to the job if the candidate were successful. Some of the likely changes may result in the test(s) no longer being
relevant and a different test or assessment would become more appropriate. The key thing is to remember that candidates are being assessed for the job they will be carrying out if successfully appointed, therefore the assessments need to be a reflection of that.

- You should also consider the assessments being used within the context of a disability. For example, whilst a job may require analytical and reasoning skills, it may not actually require strong motor skills. Therefore if someone has poor motor skills they will be disadvantaged if required to use a mouse or keyboard in an assessment. In this situation, it would be a reasonable adjustment to allow the candidate to use someone else to enter the chosen responses for them.

Specific adjustments

We recognise our responsibilities as a test developer and have designed our online tests in such a way to ensure appropriate modifications can be made to the tests. The term ‘appropriate’ is of particular importance as modifications to a psychometric test can change the nature of the test itself (which isn’t necessarily the case for general websites). For example, if the time allowed to respond to a question were to be increased in Elements Numerical, changes would inevitably be seen to the question properties and it is therefore vital that every situation is considered on a case-by-case basis and all modifications should be made with caution. Some example adjustments are presented below:

- Give candidates the opportunity to complete the practice tests using their own access technology or computer settings. If they prove to be incompatible with the online tests, consider alternative sources of evidence or talk to us for advice.

- If the candidate’s disability makes it difficult for them to use a mouse, clear instructions can be given on how the keyboard can be used instead (Tab to move between fields, Space bar to select a field and Return to enter a response).

- If the candidate has problems reading text on screen it is possible to invite them to a test administration session where the questions are read out to them by a reader and the responses are inputted on their behalf. This method is workable for personality questionnaires but less so for ability tests such as Elements, which are timed and where there is a lot of information on screen that would have to be described to the candidate (for example, graphs and tables).

- Candidates can easily increase the size of the onscreen font using Ctrl and + keys or they can use the ‘View’ menu on their browser to increase the size of the on-screen font without it impacting any of the characteristics.

- We can extend test times for a candidate when the need arises, in response to evidence from the test administrator of why this is required. When considering an appropriate amount of extra time to give the candidate it is useful to talk to them about what recommendations have been made for them by professionals. For example, anyone diagnosed with dyslexia will generally have a report written by an educational psychologist or similar that suggests an appropriate percentage of extra time. When no such report is available, it is often useful to consider the likely adjustments that would be made to the job itself. If one would expect the successful applicant to be given 50% extra time to complete their work, then it makes sense to offer this amount of extra time to the candidate for completing the tests. This will enable you to compare their performance to the demands of the job they will be doing.

- It may sometimes be appropriate to accept a lower ‘pass rate’ for a person whose disability inhibits their performance in a test where this is unlikely to harm performance in the actual job. Whilst a cut-off score may be applied as part of the project, employers may need to be more flexible for disabled applicants. The key is to make a judgment about the candidate’s performance in relation to the requirements of the job.
Considerations

One of the benefits of our ability tests is the fact that they are adaptive. The benefits of this are outlined on our website (www.talentqgroup.com). However, this technology uses an approach whereby candidate’s responses to one set of questions dictate what the next questions will be. As a result, it is impossible to exactly mirror this technology on paper. In a situation where this type of assessment is required, it would be advisable to seek alternative sources of evidence.

Some employers opt to use a ‘Guaranteed Interview Scheme’ for those applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria as specified in the person specification and job description. This is the case for those who sign up to the “two ticks scheme”. Displaying the ticks demonstrates that the organization is positive about disabled people and has signed up to five key commitments, one of which is to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities.

As a qualified test user, you know the results from tests and questionnaires usually make up one part of the overall assessment process. When responding to the needs of a disabled candidate, you should have this in mind. There are alternative sources of evidence that can be sought and examined as a responsible test user.

Useful resources

Ability Net www.abilitynet.org.uk/index.php
Action for Blind People www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk
Blind in Business www.blindinbusiness.co.uk
The International Test Commission guidelines www.intestcom.org/guidelines/index.php
British Dyslexia Association www.bdadyslexia.org.uk
British Stammering Association www.stammering.org
Department for Work and Pensions www.dwp.gov.uk/employers/dda
DirectGov www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/
Dyslexia Action www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk
Employers’ Forum on Disability www.efd.org.uk
Employers’ Forum on Disability (NI) www.efdni.org
Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com
Mencap www.mencap.org.uk
Office for Disability Issues www.officefordisability.gov.uk
Psychological Testing Centre: www.psychtesting.org.uk/gatpd.cfm
RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) www.rnib.org.uk
RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) www.rnid.org.uk
Scope www.scope.org.uk