

## The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey 2019:

### Key findings and statistical headlines

Business Disability Forum, April 2019

Between March and April 2019, Business Disability Forum undertook **The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey**. We called for employees, managers, and senior leaders in UK workforces to share their views and experiences of requesting, implementing, and reviewing adjustments at work. We received 1,200 responses. This is a summary of the headline findings and statistics.

#### **We should ensure our approach to designing workplace adjustments is individualised and holistic**

The survey raises the importance of an individualised and holistic approach to workplace adjustments. **Over half (57 per cent)** of respondents who had disabilities or conditions said that they had more than one. Further to this **71 per cent** of these respondents reported that they had more than one type of adjustment in place. This reminds us that employers should be responsive to a range of support that is needed, and specific to an individual *employee*, not an individual condition.

#### **The types of workplace adjustments in place are not currently meeting the needs of a relatively high proportion of employees**

Of all respondents in the survey with disabilities or conditions who had workplace adjustments in place:

- Whilst **44 per cent** said that they had all the adjustments they needed, **27 per cent** had requested other or alternative adjustments that were not yet in place, and **29 per cent** had considered them but decided not to request them.
- Just over **two fifths (43 per cent)** agreed strongly they were happy with the adjustments they had. Another **38 per cent** agreed slightly and almost **a fifth (18 per cent)** actively disagreed to some extent with this statement.

## **Conversations about adjustments are critical, and managers and supervisors are overwhelmingly the first port of call for employees. The importance of their skills in managing these conversations at the set up stages, and on-going review, should not be under-estimated**

- **76 per cent** of respondents with disabilities and conditions who had adjustments in place at the time of the survey said that they had personally initiated the first conversation.
- **89 per cent** of respondents with disabilities and conditions who had adjustments in place at the time of the survey said their manager or supervisor was the main contact at the initial stages and **77 per cent** said they were the main contact when reviewing how adjustments were working for them. Employees rely far more on their managers and supervisors as a contact point for reviewing the effectiveness of adjustments: whilst **28 per cent** mentioned the disability or workplace adjustments team at set up, just **8 per cent** mentioned them as a contact point when reviewing effectiveness.
- The frequency in which respondents had conversations about the effectiveness of adjustments was not as high as we would advise with **15 per cent** saying that they never had these conversations and **3 in 10** (30 per cent) saying they happened once a year or less often.
- The waiting time for adjustments to be put in place, from the initial conversation, show some signs of improvement from what Business Disability Forum were hearing about five years ago, however, almost **3 in 10** respondents (27 per cent) were waiting for more than six months.
- Over half of the respondents mentioned that they had experienced difficulties in the process. These were most commonly attributed to either their manager in terms of understanding and support and/or their awareness of the process, the process taking too long (delays in approvals, for example) and/or the perception that the organisation itself did not understand what was needed or able to give its support effectively.

## **Perceived success of provision and process: change is needed**

Of all respondents with disabilities or conditions with workplace adjustments in place at the time of the survey, just **a fifth (19 per cent)** felt that all barriers had been removed. Just **3 in 10 (30 per cent)** were confident that their employer would 'definitely' respond to adjustments requests, if needed, in the future.

## **There is a perception, widely held by respondents with managerial responsibilities, that adjustments and support for staff with disabilities are not a priority at board or senior leadership level**

Just **32 per cent** of respondents with management responsibilities (almost all of which either had their own disability or had experience of managing someone with a disability or the adjustment process) agreed strongly that adjustments and support for staff with disabilities was a priority at board or senior leadership level. When analysed by type and level of responsibility, under half of respondents with a senior leadership role, for example departmental director or board level, agreed strongly that workplace adjustments was a priority at board level (**49 per cent**).

## Technical note

Business Disability Forum asked their membership organisations, partners and stakeholders, as well as the disability, human resources and business press, and social media to share a link to an online survey about workplace adjustments. The questionnaire explored the experiences and perceptions of getting, and working with, adjustments in the workplace. Employees and managers were asked to take part; the only criteria in place was that they should be UK based and that, if self-employed, respondents should be working with organisations on long term contracts.

The survey link remained open for four weeks from 11 March to 8 April 2019. Taking into account various routing to relevant questions, the average completion time was just under ten minutes.

Of course when an invitation to a survey is disseminated in this way, those who respond are self-selecting and will not represent the offline world or those who are not associated to the channels disseminating the survey link. This being the case, we cannot report the findings as a representative measure of behaviour and attitude across the whole of the UK. However, each and every response is someone's story and the feedback is incredibly valuable. This is a large body of evidence. Due to the fact that over 1,200 individuals took the time to share their thoughts and experiences, we can build a very detailed picture of what is working in relation to adjustments and what challenges we still face. We now have the ability to give informed opinion on what adjustments are most common, what is needed, and the perceived value and importance of this process in the workplace.

We thank everyone who took time to complete the survey and give us their feedback. A series of papers and a full research report will be released later in 2019.

## Further information

For more information about The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey and the **#AdjustOurWorkplaces** project, please visit [The Great Big Workplace Adjustments Survey research webpage](#) or email [policy@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk](mailto:policy@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk) Please also get in touch if you would like to receive this information in a different way.