



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Disability Confident Scheme

Summary findings from a survey of participating employers

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November 2018

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# 1. Introduction

The Disability Confident scheme was launched in November 2016 by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It aims to give employers the techniques, skills and confidence they need to recruit, retain and develop people with disabilities and long-term health conditions. There are three levels on the scheme, and each level has to be completed before moving on to the next one. On attaining each level employers receive a certificate in recognition, and a badge to use on their website and other materials:

- **Level 1 'Committed'**: This commitment reflects current good practice, and signing up will give recognition for this. Employers also commit to specific actions that will make a difference.
- **Level 2 'Employer'**: Organisations at this level complete an action-focused self-assessment covering two themes and agree to take all of the 'core actions' and at least one 'activity' specified by DWP against each theme.
- **Level 3 'Leader'**: To achieve this level, employers put the self-assessment for validation by a third party. Level 3 employers also agree to act as a champion for disability employment within local and business communities.

(You can find further information on the [Disability Confident scheme here](#).)

## 1.2. Research objectives and methodology

The objective of this research study was to understand from an employer perspective the effect that signing up to the Disability Confident scheme has had on their recruitment and retention attitudes and practices with regards to disabled people. In addition, the research aimed to understand what motivates employers to sign up to the scheme and what support those employers need to promote the scheme both within and outside of their organisation.

To meet these objectives, a quantitative telephone survey was carried out between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018 with a sample of 600 employers from the 6,217 employers who at that point had signed up to Disability Confident (membership has continued to grow and at the time of publication is around 9,000). Most participating employers were Level 1 employers (60%), a third were Level 2 employers (33%) and the remaining seven per cent were Level 3 employers. The employers that took part in the survey were representative of the wider Disability Confident scheme membership base by size and sector at the time of the survey. Further details regarding the methodology, including the sample design, can be found in the Appendix.

This report only comments on sub-group differences that are statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence. Where percentages do not sum up to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know/not applicable' categories, or question where respondents could provide more than one answer.

## 2. Key findings

- The survey findings show that overall, **employers were positive about employing people with disabilities**. Three-quarters agreed that employing someone with a disability or long-term health condition would have a positive impact on staff morale (77%). Nine in ten disagreed staff with disabilities would make the organisation less productive (88%). Those signed up to Level 3<sup>1</sup> and large employers with 250+ employees had more favourable views suggesting there is a stronger culture of employing disabled people among these employers.
- Nine in ten (88%) employers had adopted at least one inclusive employment activity since joining the scheme. This included ensuring **staff involved in the recruitment process have appropriate disability equality awareness** (39% of employers had either 'started doing' this since joining the scheme or were 'doing more' of this activity), **actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people** (37%) and **making adjustments during the recruitment process** (30%).
- The most common action taken among across all employers was **promoting they were Disability Confident** (with 68% doing this internally and 62% externally). Those signed up to Level 1 and micro employers (1 to 9 employees) were more likely to have 'started doing' at least one of the activities asked about other than promoting the scheme. These employers were also more likely to say joining the scheme encouraged them to make changes to their recruitment and retention practices that they wouldn't have done otherwise.
- The survey suggests the scheme **has had a significant impact on disability employment practices**. Across all employers, nearly half reported that they had recruited at least one person with a disability, long-term health or mental health condition as a result of the scheme (49%). This rose to 66% amongst larger employers.
- The overall **quality of the information received through the scheme was rated highly** (69% were satisfied). Ratings were lower for the support provided although the majority were still satisfied (56%). Only a small minority of employers were dissatisfied with either aspect (10% for information and 12% for support provided).
- Reflecting the positive views of the scheme, **nine in ten employers said they would recommend joining the scheme** to another employer (91%).

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the small base size, findings are indicative only for Level 3 employers

- When asked their intentions at the next renewal date, half said they expected to stay at the same level (49%) and a **third anticipated moving up a level** (32%). The remainder (18%) were unsure what they would do at the time of the interview – this may reflect that the decisions about the scheme were often undertaken with other members of staff.
- The survey revealed particular groups of employers who were more positive about the scheme. This included employers who had a **deeper level of engagement with the scheme**, such as those who signed up to Level 3 and those who had used at least one of the Disability Confident offers<sup>2</sup>. Where expectations prior to signing up to the scheme were exceeded, satisfaction levels were overwhelmingly positive.

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<sup>2</sup> These employers had used or attended at least one of the following since joining the Disability Confident scheme: webinar on specialist topics; Disability Confident events; Blogs from Disability Confident leaders and specialists; Videos and case studies from Disability Confident leaders and employers; LinkedIn members group; Facebook members group; and/or email updates.

### 3. Attitudes towards employing people with disabilities

This chapter explores employers’ attitudes towards employing people with disabilities and long-term health conditions. It looks in detail at how these perceptions vary by different types of employers.

The **majority of employers had positive attitudes towards employing people with disabilities and the benefits it could bring** to the organisation. Three-quarters of employers agreed that employing someone with a disability would have a positive impact on staff morale (77%). The proportion rises to 89%<sup>3</sup> of those signed up to Level 3 and 83% of large employers with at least 250 employees. Public sector and third sector employers were more likely to agree employing a disabled person would have a positive impact on staff morale than employers in the private sector (83% and 81% versus 69%). This may suggest the culture of employing someone with a disability is especially strong in the public and third sector.

**Table 3.1: Attitudes towards employing disabled people**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?			
The recruitment or retention of an employee who is or has become disabled has a positive impact on staff morale	Strongly agree	47%	NET AGREE: 77%
	Tend to agree	29%	
	Neither	15%	NET DISAGREE: 6%
	Tend to disagree	3%	
	Strongly disagree	3%	
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?			
There are particular challenges involved in recruiting or retaining an employee with a disability or long-term health condition	Strongly agree	10%	NET AGREE: 52%
	Tend to agree	42%	
	Neither	16%	NET DISAGREE: 31%
	Tend to disagree	19%	
	Strongly disagree	12%	
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?			
Employing someone with a disability or long-term health condition would make my organisation less productive	Strongly agree	2%	NET AGREE: 3%
	Tend to agree	2%	
	Neither	8%	NET DISAGREE: 88%
	Tend to disagree	18%	
	Strongly disagree	70%	

Base: All respondents (600)

<sup>3</sup> Due to the small base size, findings are indicative only for Level 3 employers

Similarly, employers had **positive views on the perceived impact of employing someone with a disability on the productivity of the organisation**. Around nine in ten employers (88%) did not view employing disabled people as a barrier to the organisation's productivity.

Large employers (93%) and those who already employed people with disabilities, either 12 months before signing up to the scheme (90%) and/or as a result of signing up (90%), were even more likely to disagree that employees with disabilities had a negative impact on productivity.

While employers generally viewed having staff with disabilities in the organisation favourably, half of employers reported that there were **challenges involved in recruiting and retaining people with disabilities (52%)** (although this survey did not probe on what the specific challenges were). Employers that had been trading for more than 40 years or whose experience of the scheme was worse than expected were more likely to report there were challenges (60% and 68% respectively).

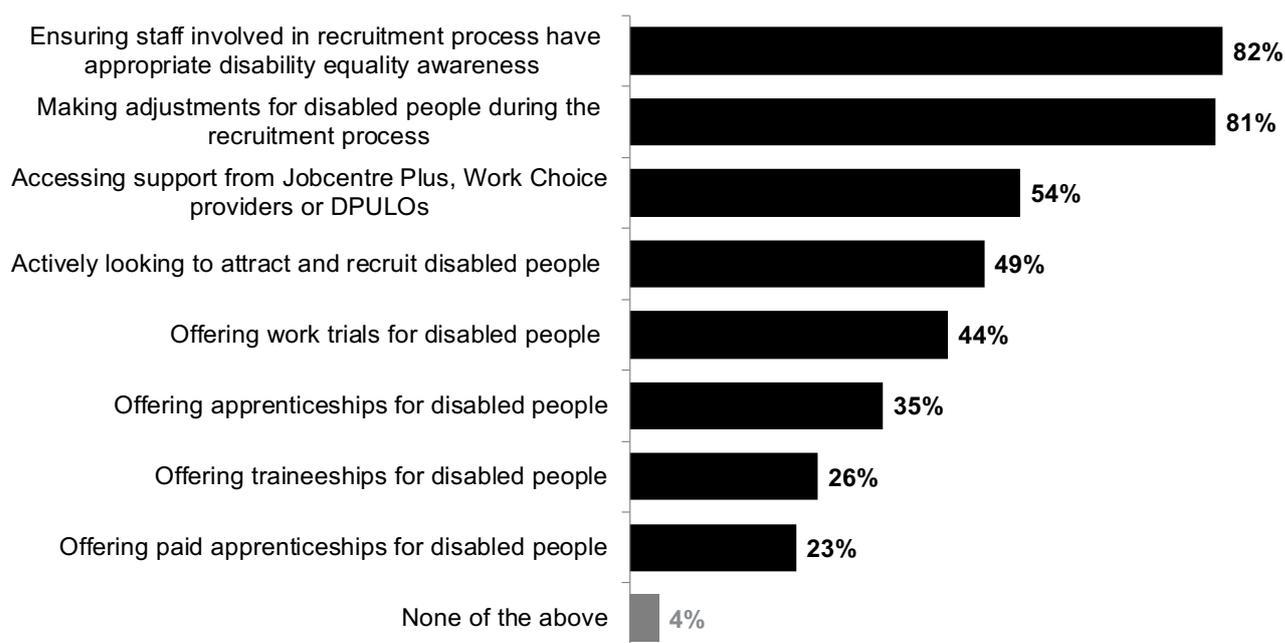
## 4. Employment and retention practices

The research sought to identify what employers were doing (or doing more of) as a consequence of joining the Disability Confident scheme. Therefore, employers were asked to describe what activities they had taken around disability employment and retention before and after joining the scheme. The survey also prompted respondents to reflect and report on what they had done as a direct consequence of becoming a Disability Confident employer. But it should be noted that the measures reported here are not designed to provide an impact evaluation of the Disability Confident scheme as they are self-reported outcomes with no counterfactual (i.e. there is no way of knowing whether that impact would have occurred anyway, without the intervention of the Disability Confident scheme).

### 4.1. Inclusive employment and retention practices before signing up to the scheme

The survey revealed that **many employers had disability employment and retention practices in place prior to joining the Disability Confidence scheme.** The most common activities prior to joining were **training staff involved in the recruitment process on appropriate disability equality awareness (82%)** and **making relevant adjustments for disabled people (81%)**.

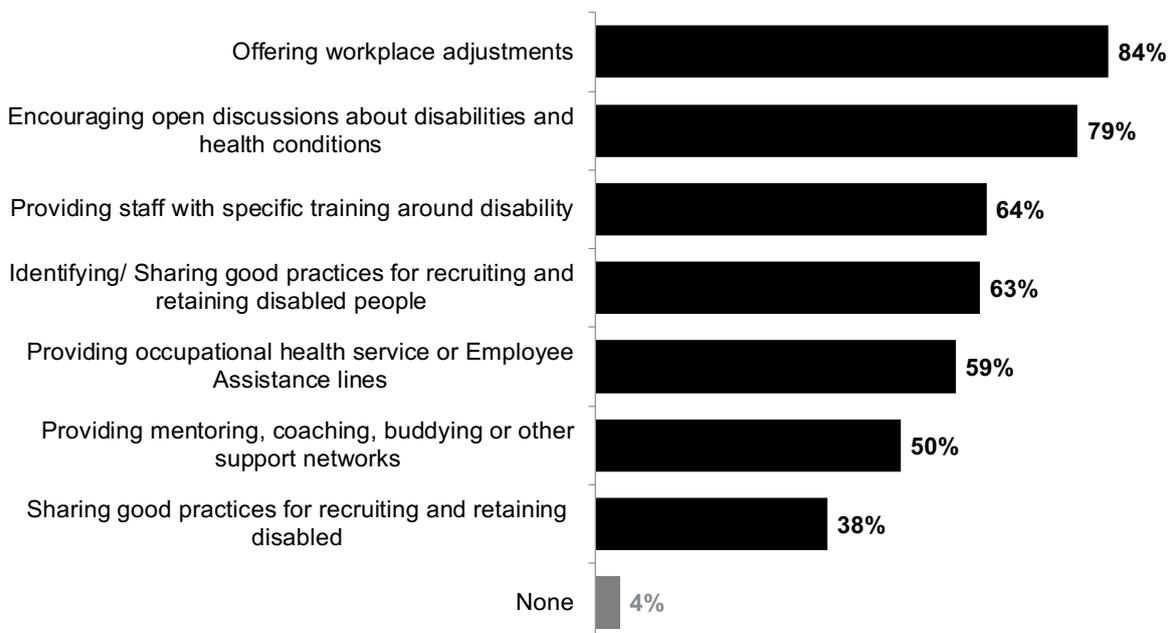
**Figure 4.1: Recruitment activities undertaken prior to joining the scheme**



Base: All respondents (600)

The survey also asked about a **range of practices to support staff and retain disabled people** in the organisation prior to joining the scheme. Over eight in ten employers had made **workplace adjustments** (84%) and a similar proportion had encouraged **open discussions about disabilities** (79%).

**Figure 4.2: In-employment activities undertaken prior to joining the scheme**



Base: All respondents (600)

Those signed up to Level 3, those who had previously been members of the Two Ticks scheme<sup>4</sup> and large employers with at least 250 employees were more likely to have adopted these disability-related recruitment and employment practices prior to joining the scheme.

## 4.2. Inclusive employment and retention practices as a result of joining the scheme

Employers were asked about their approach to recruitment after signing up to the scheme, and if they had started doing, or were doing more of each activity as a result of joining the Disability Confident scheme. The **majority of employers reported adopting at least one recruitment-related activity asked about as a result of joining the scheme (88%)** (See Figure 4.3 for recruitment activities asked about in the survey).

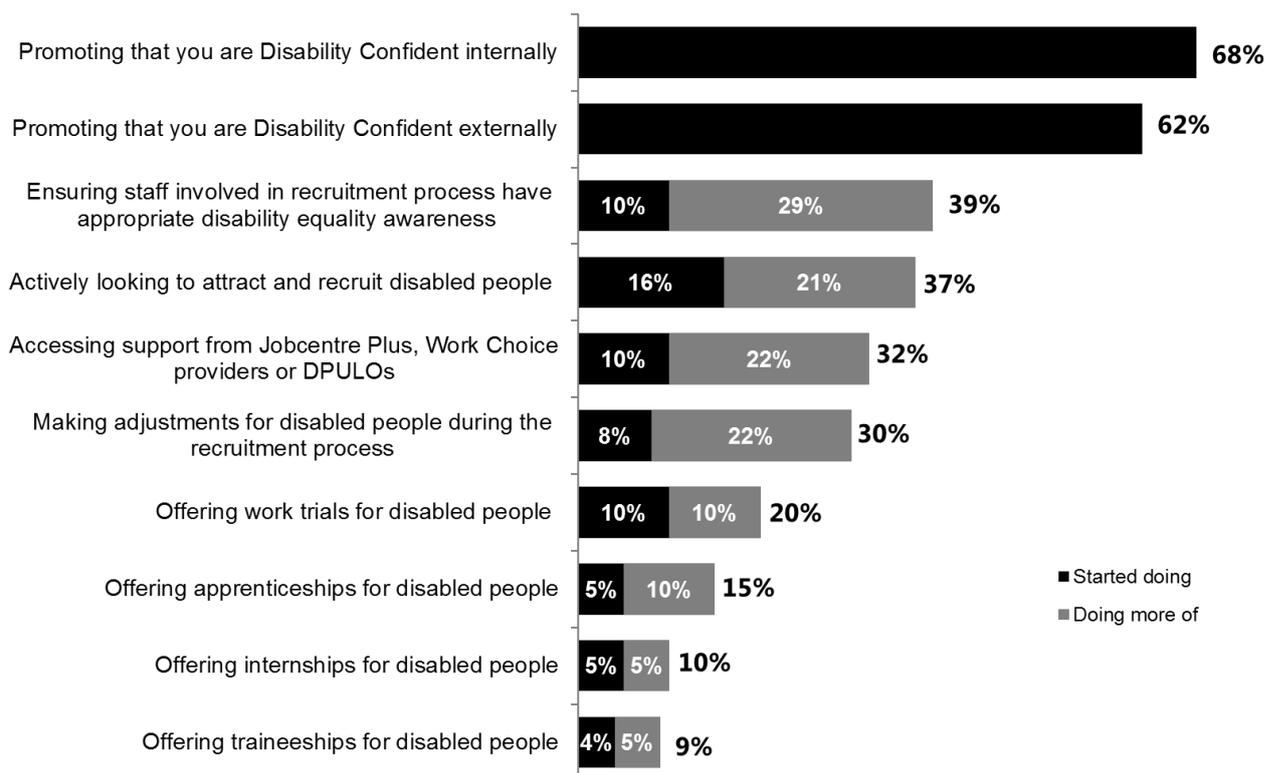
The most common activity since joining the scheme was **promoting they were a Disability Confident employer**, as shown in Figure 4.3. Apart from this, employers

<sup>4</sup> The Disability Confident Scheme replaced the Two Ticks scheme in November 2016.

were ensuring that staff involved in recruitment had the **appropriate level of disability equality awareness** (39%), **actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people** (37%), **accessing support** from Jobcentre Plus, Work Choice providers or Disabled Persons User-Led Organisations (DPULOs) (32%) and **making adjustments to the recruitment process** (30%).

Offering work trials, apprenticeships, internships or traineeships for disabled people were less common; however, this reflects the small proportion of employers offering these types of opportunities generally.

**Figure 4.3: Recruitment activities undertaken as a result of joining the scheme**



Base: All respondents (600)

Findings on the range of practices offered to support and retain disabled people in the organisation were similarly encouraging – eight in ten (80%) employers adopted at least one disability-related retention practices as a result of joining the scheme. The most common activity cited was encouraging open discussions about disabilities and health conditions (50% had done this since joining the scheme). In addition, 38% had shared good practices for recruitment and retainment internally and 35% had started or increased the amount of training for staff specifically around disabilities.

**Figure 4.4: In-employment activities undertaken as a result of joining the scheme**



Base: All respondents (600)

### 4.3. Perceived impact of the scheme

Findings from the survey suggest that the scheme has had a positive impact on recruitment. **Half of employers reported that they have recruited one or more individuals with a disability, long term health or mental health condition as a result of joining the scheme (49%).**

**Table 4.1: Recruiting disabled people as a result of signing up**

	Recruited any disabled people	Have not recruited any disabled people	Don't know <sup>5</sup>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Level 1	38%	56%	6%
Level 2	64%	26%	10%
Level 3	73%	18%	9%
Micro employer (1-9 employees)	30%	69%	1%
Small employer (10-49 employees)	47%	48%	5%
Medium employer (50-249 employees)	50%	38%	12%
Large employer (250+ employees)	66%	20%	13%

Base: All respondents (600)

<sup>5</sup> Please note that the 'Don't know' figure may be affected by employers not recording this information centrally.

As might be expected, the figures vary by size of an employer and membership level, representing the different opportunities that exist. For example, 66% of large employers had recruited at least one person with a disability compared to 30% of micro employers.

**Table 4.2: Number of disabled people recruited as a result of signing up**

	1 to 4	5 to 10	11 to 20	20+	Don't know <sup>6</sup>
<b>Overall</b>	54%	15%	4%	7%	12%
<b>Level 1</b>	70%	14%	2%	3%	6%
<b>Level 2</b>	46%	18%	7%	8%	14%
<b>Level 3</b>	25%	9%	6%	25%	28%
<b>Micro employer (1-9 employees)</b>	89%	9%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Small employer (10-49 employees)</b>	81%	11%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Medium employer (50-249 employees)</b>	61%	25%	2%	2%	9%
<b>Large employer (250+ employees)</b>	22%	16%	10%	17%	24%

Base: Those who had recruited a disabled person as a result of joining the scheme

The survey revealed that **most employers had made at least one change to their disability recruitment practices** as a result of joining the scheme (88%). A quarter of employers (26%) stated that they were unlikely to have made the changes in the absence of the scheme, and this increased to 33% among micro employers (with under 10 employees) and 30% who had not been members of the previous Two Ticks scheme. This reinforces the importance of the scheme to smaller employers and newly joined employers in relation to disability employment and retention.

#### 4.4. Expectations for the next 12 months

Half of employers expected to put in place further actions related to their Disability Confident commitments over the next 12 months (50%)<sup>7</sup>. Many employers also intended to make further adjustments to their retention practices over the next 12 months (39%) Amongst employers who had not already adopted these disability employment practices, but intended to do so over the next 12 months, the most common activities included promoting that they are Disability Confident externally (18%), identifying and sharing good practice for recruiting and retaining disabled people (also 18%) and accessing support from Jobcentre Plus, Work Choice providers or DPULOs (15%). Smaller employers, recent joiners and those signed up

<sup>6</sup> Please note that the 'Don't know' figure may be affected by employers not recording this information centrally.

<sup>7</sup> These are drawn from the list of possible commitments contained within the [Disability Confident scheme here](#) and will vary from employer to employer

to Level 1 were more likely to start implementing activities in the next 12 months than other types of employers.

# 5. Satisfaction with the scheme

This chapter looks at employers’ satisfaction with the scheme, with particular focus on the information and support provided to Disability Confident employers by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The chapter also looks at the likelihood of employers recommending the scheme and renewing their membership.

## 5.1. Satisfaction with information and support

**Satisfaction with the information received through the Disability Confident scheme was high**, with seven in ten satisfied (69%), including 25% who were ‘very satisfied’ (see Table 5.1). Attitudes towards the support provided were less favourable, although the majority of employers were still satisfied (56% including 20% ‘very satisfied’). A small proportion of employers were dissatisfied with the information and support provided (10% and 12% respectively).

**Table 5.1. Attitudes towards information received and support provided<sup>8</sup>**

<b>Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the information received about the Disability Confident Scheme?</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	25%	<b>NET SATISFIED: 69%</b>
	<b>Fairly satisfied</b>	44%	
	<b>Neither</b>	20%	
	<b>Fairly dissatisfied</b>	9%	<b>NET DISSATISFIED: 10%</b>
	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	2%	
	<b>Don’t know</b>	1%	
<b>And, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the support received about the Disability Confident Scheme?</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	20%	<b>NET SATISFIED: 56%</b>
	<b>Fairly satisfied</b>	36%	
	<b>Neither</b>	23%	
	<b>Fairly dissatisfied</b>	9%	<b>NET DISSATISFIED: 12%</b>
	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	2%	
	<b>Don’t know</b>	9%	

Base: All respondents (600)

**Employers signed up to Level 3<sup>9</sup> and those who had participated in at least one of the Disability Confident activities<sup>10</sup> were more likely to be positive about the scheme.** For example, satisfaction with information and support increased to 82%

<sup>8</sup> The research did not explore what was meant specifically by information and support.

<sup>9</sup> Due to the small base size, findings are indicative only for Level 3 employers.

<sup>10</sup> These employers had used or attended at least one of the following since joining the Disability Confident scheme: webinar on specialist topics; Disability Confident events; Blogs from Disability Confident leaders and specialists; Videos and case studies from Disability Confident leaders and employers; LinkedIn members group; Facebook members group; and/or email updates.

and 73% among Level 3<sup>11</sup> employers. Level 1 employers, on the other hand, were more likely than other employers to be dissatisfied with the support they received (14% versus 7% for Level 2 and 11% for Level 3) although the majority of these employers were still positive. This suggests employers who had a deeper level of engagement with the scheme overall were more likely to be positive. There were also differences by type of firm with private sector employers less likely than the public sector to say they were satisfied with the support (53% versus 66%).

A range of reasons was given as to why employers were satisfied with these aspects of the scheme. Most frequently, employers said the **information received through the scheme was straightforward and easy to use** (cited by 48% of those who were satisfied). Other employers pointed to the support they received throughout the Disability Confident journey (15%) and the helpful examples or tools (12%). Employers also commented on how easy and quick it was to sign up (11%) and the quick response from the Disability Confident team (9%). Suggestions for improvements focused on receiving more help, including clearer information, more support as well as examples of disability employment and retention practices.

## 5.2. Recommending the scheme and renewing membership

Reflecting the positive views of the scheme, **almost all employers said they were likely to recommend the scheme** to another employer (68% would 'definitely recommend' it and a further 24% would 'probably recommend' it). Just five per cent said they would not recommend it. Those with high levels of advocacy included Level 3<sup>12</sup> (86% would 'definitely recommend') and large employers with 250+ employees (75%). Those who recalled using at least one of the Disability Confident offers were more likely to recommend the scheme (78% would 'definitely recommend' compared with only 56% of other employers).

In terms of **renewing membership**, four in five employers stated that they were planning to do so at the next renewal date (81%). This included half who said they intended to stay at the same level (49%) and a third who anticipated moving up a level (32%). Level 1 employers (37%) were more likely than Level 2 employers (29%) to plan a move to the next level. Large employers with at least 250 employees (39%) and those who had used one of the Disability Confident offers (37%) were more likely than average to expect to progress to the next level. This rose to 42% of those who also reported that their experience was better than their initial expectations. Overall around one in five employers were unsure what their organisation would do at renewal (18%). While this may be related to negative perceptions of the scheme among a minority of employers (for example 26% of those dissatisfied with information and support were unsure) it also reflects that decisions about the scheme are often made in collaboration with other members of staff.

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<sup>11</sup> Due to the small base size, findings are indicative only for Level 3 employers

<sup>12</sup> Due to the small base size, findings are indicative only for Level 3 employers

**Table 5.2.: Recommending the scheme and renewing membership**

<b>Would you recommend joining the Disability Confident Scheme to another employer?</b>	<b>Yes, definitely</b>	68%	<b>NET RECOMMEND: 91%</b>
	<b>Yes, probably</b>	24%	
	<b>No, probably not</b>	4%	
	<b>No, definitely not</b>	1%	
	<b>Don't know</b>	4%	
<b>At the next renewal date for your Disability Confident membership, are you planning to...?</b>	<b>Move up a level</b>	32%	<b>NET WOULD RENEW: 81%</b>
	<b>Stay at the same level</b>	49%	
	<b>Do not intend to renew</b>	1%	
	<b>Don't know</b>	18%	

Base: All respondents (600)

The **level of satisfaction with the scheme was closely linked to employers' propensity to recommend the scheme to others and renew their own membership**. For example, virtually all those who were satisfied with the support received would recommend the scheme (98% including 82% who would 'definitely recommend' it). Similarly, customers who were positive about the information provided were more likely to expect to move up a level (35% compared to 32% overall).

## 6. Areas for improvement

The majority of employers were satisfied with the Disability Confident scheme, and as a positive expression of this satisfaction, nine in ten said they would recommend the scheme. Around two in five employers could not think of any improvements to the scheme (43%). However, the survey revealed some areas which could help improve the experience of employers who have already signed up.

### 6.1. Suggestions for improvement

#### **Level of guidance and information provided**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a minority of employers expressed dissatisfaction with one or more aspect of the scheme. Lack of clear information and guidance was the most commonly cited reason among those who were dissatisfied (38% raised without prompting). Some employers also felt they would like more examples of best employment and retention practices (31%), more guidance on training (15%) and more advice in general (11%).

#### **Support throughout the journey**

Among those who were dissatisfied, three in ten said they did not feel supported on their Disability Confident journey (28%). Some employers suggested they would like a direct point of contact to provide advice and support.

#### **Tailored advice**

More specific 'how to' advice was the most commonly suggested improvement to the scheme (13%). The findings suggest that employers want issue based advice and helpful examples of good disability employment and retention practices. Whilst some were planning to share examples of good practice externally in the next 12 months, more could be done to encourage employers to connect with each other and share learning and experiences.

### 6.2. Encouraging promotion of the scheme

Employers who were not already promoting the Disability Confident scheme were asked why they were not doing so and what would encourage them to do this. While the most common response was a lack of time or resources to make changes to their website or materials (21%), a significant minority said they would like more communications about the benefits of the scheme and access to more materials to help them promote it (16%). A further one in ten suggested better awareness of the scheme's Disability Confident badge generally (11%). Only a very small proportion (3%) stated that they do not plan to promote their membership at all.

## 7. Appendix

### 7.1. Methodology

A quantitative telephone survey was conducted with 600 employers who are Disability Confident scheme employers from a sample of 6,217 employers provided by DWP. The fieldwork for the survey was conducted between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Interviews were undertaken with the most senior person responsible for staffing arrangements at the organisation which may have been the HR Director/Manager, managing director/owner or other senior decision maker. The average interview length was 21 minutes.

### 7.2. The sample

A sample of 600 employers was considered appropriate for robust analysis at the overall level and to ensure that analysis could be carried out for different groups of employers, including by membership level, size of organisation and sector.

**Quotas were set on membership level to ensure the survey was representative of the scheme membership.** A breakdown of the completed interviews by scheme level and length of membership is in Table 7.2 below along with the overall sample population for comparison. The profile of respondents was broadly representative and therefore no weighting was applied.

**Table 7.2: Sample and interview profile**

Profile	Sample profile	% of total	Interviews completed	% of total	
<b>Scheme level</b>	Level 1	3,737	60%	351	59%
	Level 2	2,365	38%	205	34%
	Level 3	115	2%	44	7%
<b>Employer size</b>	Micro (1-9 employees)	1,701	27%	152	27%
	Small (10-49 employees)	1,628	26%	151	24%
	Medium (50-249 employees)	1,229	20%	108	19%
	Large (250+ employees)	1,659	27%	164	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,217</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Most of the employers included in the survey were Level 1 employers (60%), one-third were Level 2 employers and the remaining seven per cent were Level 3 employers. Large employers were more likely than average to be Level 2 or Level 3 employers (43% and 17% respectively).

### 7.3. Interpreting the findings

Due to the fact that surveys typically represent the views of a sample population, sampling error must be considered when evaluating the findings. This is measured by the confidence level and interval of the data. Most commonly, market research studies require a 95% confidence level, indicating that we can be 95% confident that the estimate has not been arrived at by chance. The confidence interval shows the variation that may exist in the findings drawn from a sample. For example, this survey shows that 69% of employers who responded were satisfied with information received. However, due to the intrinsic characteristics of sampling, this will be surrounded by a confidence interval, in this case  $\pm 3.7\%$ . This indicates that the real figure (the ‘true’ figure if the whole population were surveyed) lies somewhere between 65.3% and 72.7%.

The following table shows the confidence intervals for those findings that centre around 10% or 90%, 30% or 70% and 50% given the total study sample size of 600 (these assume a 95% confidence level).

**Table 7.3.: Confidence intervals**

Confidence intervals			
Sample size	Split on question		
600	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	$\pm 2.4$	$\pm 3.7$	$\pm 4$