

agency; specifically, that he was not telephoned by the respondent nor provided with a list of the essential criteria for the role before a call.

Proceedings to date

3. Case management preliminary hearings in this matter were heard before Employment Judge Raynor on 14 April 2021, before Employment Judge O'Rourke on 5 July 2021, and before Judge Gray on 23 November 2021 and 13 June 2022. The claimant consistently failed to comply with case management orders in relation to disclosure and the respondent made a number of strike out applications which were not successful. There was also a preliminary hearing before Employment Judge Salter on 3 August 2021 at which the claimant's claim for direct discrimination was struck out. Employment Judge Slater allowed the claim for failure to make reasonable adjustments to proceed but noted that the claimant "may not have cleared the modest threshold by much, and he should not consider that he has any judicial endorsement in this judgement about the strength of his claim beyond it surpassing the r39 hurdle."
4. The final hearing of this matter was heard on 22 and 23 August 2022 before this Tribunal panel. The claimant's claim for failure to make reasonable adjustments under section 20 and 21 of the Equality Act 2010 failed and was dismissed in a Judgment dated 19 September 2022, which was sent to the parties on 29 September 2022.
5. The respondent made a costs application on 25 October 2022. This was originally listed for hearing on 16 March 2023 but was adjourned on 14th March 2023 by Employment Judge Dawson at the claimant's request in order that a scheduled psychological assessment of the claimant due to his recent diagnosis of ADHD (which was due to take place on 17 March 2023) could be completed. The hearing was re-listed for 18 August 2023 and then re-listed again at the claimant's request and with the consent of the respondent to 9 August 2023. On 7 July 2023 the claimant made a further application for an adjournment of the costs hearing on the basis that a further follow-up medical report which was due to be received "may be of use" to the court, but this was refused, and the costs hearing was held on 9 August 2023.

The Hearing

6. This has been a remote hearing which has been consented to by the parties. The form of remote hearing was by Cloud Video Platform. A face to face hearing was not held because it was not practicable, and all issues could be determined in a remote hearing.
7. Prior to the start of the hearing, the Tribunal panel was forwarded an updated schedule of costs totalling £44,475.50, from the respondent under cover of

an email from the respondent's solicitor dated 8 August 2023 asking for a summary assessment of costs capped at £20,000. The Tribunal panel was also forwarded a number of emails from the claimant which contained some relevant information relating to the claimant's personal financial position, some information relevant to his personal situation, a significant amount of duplicated information and a significant amount of general information on autism, dyspraxia and ADHD. These included an email of 29 July 2023 with eight attachments; an email of 31 July 2023 with information on the claimant's credit card and Personal Independence Payment (PIP); an email of 5 August 2023 with information about a web-site which the claimant said was his; a further email dated 5 August 2023 with screen shots of mortgage and credit cards but no name details; an email dated 6 August 2023 with an undated screen-shot of the claimant's CVLibrary page showing he had made 4643 job applications; an email of 7 August 2023 with further information on the claimant's PIP payments; an email from the claimant dated 7 August 2023 showing job applications he had made; and two further emails dated 7 August 2023, one with eight attachments and one with twenty-one attachments, primarily attaching duplicate general medical information on autism, dyspraxia and ADHD but with some additional screen shots relevant to the claimant's personal position. The panel members had reviewed the emails but not all of the attachments before the hearing commenced. It transpired that the respondent had in addition prepared and uploaded an indexed hearing bundle of 523 pages (which contained some, but not all, of the information sent separately by the claimant). At the start of the hearing the Tribunal had not however been provided with a copy of this bundle and the hearing was adjourned in order that this could be obtained and the hearing then reconvened.

8. Counsel for the respondent had also prepared a skeleton argument on the issue of costs. The claimant had not prepared a witness statement. The Tribunal was able to hear the respondent's application and the claimant's evidence and submissions as to why he did not believe a costs order should be made. The Tribunal was referred to relevant documents by both parties during the hearing and in Counsel's skeleton argument. There was, however, not sufficient time for the Tribunal to deliberate on the day or review all the relevant documents due to the delay in obtaining the bundle, and the Tribunal reconvened on the 14 November 2023 to review, deliberate and reach a judgment.
9. The claimant's responses to questions during the hearing were on a number of occasions inconsistent and evasive and his submissions were also in the main unclear and on occasion inconsistent. At the substantive hearing it was noted that the claimant avoided giving "yes or no" answers and instead gave discursive answers which did not address the question asked. Employment Judge Salter in the Preliminary strike out hearing also noted: "cross examination of the claimant took longer than had been initially timetabled,

this is no criticism of Mr Mahmood, rather the claimant repeatedly failed to answer the questions that was asked of him resulting in the question having to be re-asked often multiple times before a relevant answer was obtained. Even giving all due latitude to the claimant in this regard I found him to be an unconvincing witness". In this hearing too, the claimant was evasive, inconsistent and unclear.

The Application for Costs

10. The respondent makes an application for its costs on the basis that:
 - 10.1. the claimant has acted vexatiously, disruptively, and otherwise unreasonably in bringing the proceedings and/or in the way the proceedings were conducted, and/or
 - 10.2. The claim had no reasonable prospects of success.
11. In support of the application for cost on the grounds that the claim has no reasonable prospects of success, and that the claimant had acted unreasonably and vexatiously, the respondent asserts that the claimant is a serial litigant who has been evasive about the number of claims he has brought or how many have been withdrawn following a deposit order. The respondent refers to the findings made by the Tribunal in relation to the claimant's practice of applying for multiple roles indiscriminately and responding with threats of litigation if his application is not progressed, and issuing a claim if a settlement is not reached. The respondent says that the claim had no reasonable prospects of success, (which the claimant knew as an experienced litigant), that the claim was not made in good faith and that the claimant was unreasonable in the way he conducted the litigation pointing out that the claimant is an experienced litigant. The respondent asserts that the claimant had received costs warnings and relies on the findings of fact reached by this Tribunal at the substantive hearing in this matter as identified in the skeleton argument. The respondent further summarised the claimant's financial disclosure and asserts that it is incomplete.
12. The Tribunal understand that the claimant resists the application on the grounds that he has dyspraxia, autism and ADHD and that his means are limited. He has not challenged the level of costs incurred by the respondent.

Findings of Fact Relevant to the Costs Application

Liability Hearing

13. The Tribunal relies on the relevant findings of fact made and the conclusions reached at the substantive hearing in this matter and set out in the Judgement of this Tribunal dated 19 September 2022.

14. The key findings include that:
- 14.1. the claimant is unrealistic in applying for roles for which he has no relevant experience and that this was the case in relation to the role of Technical Manager at Energy Systems Catapult;
 - 14.2. the claimant is capable of amending his CV, as he has already done in order to increase the focus on his reasonable adjustment requirements. The claimant's evidence is that he has been recommended to produce bespoke CVs targeted at specific roles/sectors by a work coach but that he has elected not to follow this advice, although we conclude that he would be able to do so in the same way as he has been able to produce a full and professional CV setting out his substantive experience;
 - 14.3. he could, if he chose to do so, produce a small number of targeted CVs which would provide all relevant information for those roles where his application would be strong enough to merit a shortlisting interview rather than persist with applying for numerous roles based on his system of using keywords and salary which results in many applications for roles where he has no reasonable prospect of being shortlisted;
 - 14.4. the claimant's claim is misconceived as counsel for the respondent submits. We have found that the claimant has developed a system of applying for roles by submitting his CV without spending any time assessing whether he meets the requirements of the role, with the expressed requirement that on every occasion, no matter how weak his application for a role taken at its highest could be, the employer or agency should offer him the opportunity to make an oral application after sending him what he terms to be the "essential requirements" of the role. If this is not done, he responds with the threat of litigation and issues a claim unless settlement is reached via ACAS. This is the process the claimant has adopted in this case. The claimant has confirmed under cross-examination that he has never paid a deposit order and when faced with one, he does withdraw the claim, or if an Unless Order is made, the claim does not continue by default. We have been referred to previous judgments in which the claimant's claim has been struck out in circumstances where he has adopted a similar practice of applying for a role where he has no relevant experience and note in particular the judgment of Employment Judge R Clark in the case of *Mallon v MBA Notts Ltd* and the detailed discussion of the claimant's lack of experience in the manufacture of pre-cast concrete which led to the decision that the claim had no reasonable prospect of success and the claim being struck out. In this case the claimant's claim for failure to make reasonable adjustments was not struck out at a preliminary hearing (although the claim for direct discrimination was), a

deposit order has not been made and the claim has proceeded to final hearing, but we conclude that the claimant as an experienced litigant must have known that this claim had no reasonable prospect of success and we conclude that it was not made in good faith but as part of a wider campaign as the respondent alleges.

15. In addition the following relevant findings of fact have been reached.

Medical

16. In addition to dyspraxia, which was the disability relied on for the purposes of this claim, the claimant has been diagnosed with autism and ADHD. The claimant attended a psychological needs assessment on 17 March 2023 and the report of this assessment has been provided to the Tribunal. Having considered this thorough report, the Tribunal note that the specific issues relevant identified relating to work and employment relate to problems with efficiency and keeping a role; and the relevant issue related to life skills is noted as excessive or inappropriate use of the internet. The other factors relating to family and living circumstances, ability to keep up with household chores self-concept and social and communication skills are not relevant to the matters before the Tribunal. We that the claimant has been identified as having a significant impairment of spontaneous mind wandering and have taken that into account in assessing his evidence and considering the respondent's application.

Costs Warning

17. In their ET3 the respondent set out a robust and clear defence to the claim and stated their intention of asking for compensation for their costs if the claim was progressed.
18. In an email dated 12 April 2021 a more detailed costs letter was sent which referred to Rule 76 setting out the relevant provisions, and stating that "the claim had no reasonable prospects of success and that the claimant had acted vexatiously abusively disruptively and unreasonably in bringing his claim for the following reasons:
- There is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that our client discriminated against you on the grounds of disability or at all, nor is there even an inference of discrimination;
 - You have failed to particularise the legal basis of your claim;
 - It is overtly obviously from the abusive and unreasonable tone and content of your emails to our client that your intentions were and continue to be financial gain."
19. In the judgment in the claimant's successful EAT appeal in his case against AECOM Limited *UKEAT/0175/20/LA*, HHJ Taylor stated: "The Claimant told

me that his applications are for jobs that he genuinely wants. Were that not the case, and were it to be established that multiple applications were being made for jobs that he does not want, with the aim of bringing claims, possibly to achieve settlements, that is matter which could result in strikeouts and costs.”

20. We also note Employment Judge Salter’s comment to the claimant as set out in paragraph 3 above.
21. We find that the consequences of bringing unmeritorious claims in general without a good evidential basis had been brought to the claimant’s attention as had the consequences of proceeding with a claim which had no reasonable prospects of success and that the claimant had been expressly warned that he was at risk of costs if he proceeded with this claim without there being reasonable prospects of success based on cogent evidence.

Financial means

22. The claimant runs a business, Renovareuk.co.uk Limited which is registered at Companies house. The claimant is the sole director of the company. Its accounts show its net assets have increased from £8,566 in 2018 to £45,113 in 2021. The information on this company was obtained by the respondent. The claimant did not voluntarily disclose his involvement in the company.
23. We find that this is the corporate vehicle for the claimant’s on-line business which he seeks to characterise as a “hobby”. The claimant has stated that he only sells four (or five) products. The respondent has provided screen shots of e-bay, instagram and facebook pages which show a substantial number of different products. The claimant does not deny that this is his business and asserts that the e-bay page in the bundle with 48 products showing is explained by these being essentially the same products. We do not find his explanation credible, and we are unable to reach any conclusions about the size of the undertaking or rely on the screenshots of the e-bay/paypal income provided by the claimant which, without further supporting evidence do not appear to be consistent with the verbal and other documentary evidence in the bundle about the level of income received. There has been no disclosure of the Renovareuk.co.uk bank account although the claimant has asserted that rental income (see below) is paid into this account, nor have we seen evidence such as personal bank account statements showing how much of the Renovare income is, or is not, paid to the claimant as earnings (by way of salary, dividend or otherwise) in his role as the sole director of the company.
24. The claimant owns two properties but has provided no current valuation. He lives in one with his partner and son and rents out the other. He has disclosed details of two mortgages with the TSB (£176,124) and Bank of Ireland

£105,329 (by way of a screen shot of a credit check with no name) and limited information about the rental income and costs associated with the rented property by way of email and verbally in the Tribunal. There is no comprehensive or credible supporting evidence for his assertions which are inconsistent, and specifically the bank account details disclosed (individual pages only) do not evidence this income and the alleged outgoings. Given the incomplete nature and general unreliability of his evidence, we are unable to conclude what are the current capital values of the two properties net of any outstanding mortgages nor can we determine the net value of any rental income from the second property.

25. The claimant has provided updated information about his PIP payments which show he is in receipt of a mobility payment of just over £26.90 per week.
26. Throughout these proceedings the claimant has failed to provide details of the number of claims he has brought. In these proceedings he was first asked this question by Employment Judge Rayner at the hearing on 14 April 2021 (having confirmed he could think of three current claims) and was ultimately subject to an Unless order to provide details via the AECOM case bundle by Employment Judge Gray on 13 June 2022; an order he was found to have “partially” complied with by Employment Judge Raynor on 20 July 2022. The claimant was still giving inconsistent answers to this question in this hearing, stating “he has issued so many he can’t remember”. The CVLibrary page shows he had at the unknown date of the screenshot made a total of 4643 job applications; as compared to the “over 2,000” he had made at the time of the previous hearing in August 2022. No evidence has been led as to how many of these applications have resulted in a settlement payment being made and the claimant has failed to disclose his total income or assets. Given the evasive and incomplete nature of the claimant’s evidence the Tribunal are unable to determine the level of any awards already paid to the claimant, for example in settlement of claims that show on the record as having been withdrawn, or the value of any settlement monies received by him prior to him issuing proceedings.
27. In the light of the above findings, the Tribunal are therefore unable to assess the claimant’s overall financial situation.

The Rules

28. The relevant rules are set out in the Employment Tribunals (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) Regulations 2013 (“the Rules”).
29. Rule 76(1) provides: "a Tribunal may make a costs order or a preparation time order, and shall consider whether to do so, where it considers that – (a) a party (or that party's representative) has acted vexatiously, abusively,

disruptively or otherwise unreasonably in either the bringing of the proceedings (or part) or the way that the proceedings (or part) have been conducted; or (b) any claim or response had no reasonable prospect of success.

30. Under Rule 77 a party may apply for a costs order or a preparation time order at any stage up to 28 days after the date on which the judgment finally determining the proceedings in respect of that party was sent to the parties. No such order may be made unless the paying party has had a reasonable opportunity to make representations (in writing or at a hearing, as the Tribunal may order) in response to the application.
31. Rule 78 empowers a Tribunal to make an order in respect of a specified amount not exceeding £20,000 or alternatively to order the paying party to pay the whole or a specified part of the costs with the amount to be determined following a detailed assessment.
32. Under Rule 84, in deciding whether to make a costs, preparation time, or wasted costs order, and if so in what amount, the Tribunal may have regard to the paying party's (or, where a wasted costs order is made, the representative's) ability to pay.

The Law

33. The starting position is that an award of costs is the exception rather than the rule. As Sedley LJ stated in *Gee v Shell Ltd [2003] [2003] IRLR 82 CA* (paragraph 35) "It is nevertheless a very important feature of the employment jurisdiction that it is designed to be accessible to people without the need of lawyers, and that in sharp distinction from ordinary litigation in the UK, losing does not ordinarily mean paying the other side's costs ...".
34. However, the Employment Tribunal has a wide discretion under the Rules where an application for costs is made under Rule 76. As per Mummery LJ at para 41 in *Barnsley BC v Yerrakalva [2012] IRLR 78 CA*, "The vital point in exercising the discretion to order costs is to look at the whole picture of what happened in the case and to ask whether there has been unreasonable conduct by the claimant in bringing and conducting the case and, in doing so, to identify the conduct, what was unreasonable about it, and what effects it had."
35. When considering an application for costs the Tribunal should have regard to the two-stage process outlined in *Monaghan v Close Thornton [2002] EAT/0003/01* by Lindsay J at paragraph 22: "Is the cost threshold triggered, e.g. was the conduct of the party against whom costs is sought unreasonable? And if so, ought the Tribunal to exercise its discretion in favour of the receiving party, having regard to all the circumstances?"

36. The threshold to trigger costs is the same whether a litigant is or is not professionally represented, although in applying those tests, the EAT has held that the status of a litigant is a matter which the tribunal must take into account – see *AQ Ltd v Holden* [2012] IRLR 648 EAT in which Richardson J commented: “Justice requires the tribunals do not apply professional standards to lay people, who may be involved in legal proceedings for the only time in their life. Tribunals must bear this in mind when assessing the threshold tests in [rule 76(1)(a)]. Further, even if the threshold tests for an order of costs are met, the tribunal has discretion whether to make an order. This discretion will be exercised having regard to all the circumstances. It is not irrelevant that a lay person may have brought proceedings with little or no access to specialist help and advice.” However, Richardson J also acknowledged that it does not follow from this “that lay people are immune from orders for costs: far from it, as the cases make clear. Some litigants in person are found to have behaved vexatiously or unreasonably even when proper allowance is made for their inexperience and lack of objectivity”. These statements were approved by Underhill P in *Vaughan v LB of Newham* [2013] IRLR 713.
37. Where a party has been lying, this will not of itself necessarily result in a costs award being made, although it is one factor that needs to be considered. As per Rimer LJ in *Arrowsmith v Nottingham Trent University* [2011] ICR 159 CA it will always be necessary for the tribunal to examine the context, and to look at the nature, gravity and effect of the lie in determining the unreasonableness of the alleged conduct. The fact that a claimant may not have deliberately lied does not preclude reaching the conclusion that a claim had no reasonable prospect of success or that the claim had not been reasonably brought and pursued.
38. Counsel for the respondent has referred the Tribunal to the case of *Saka v Fitzroy Robinson UKEAT/0241/00* in support of his contention that a tribunal is entitled to take previous claims which have failed into account, depending on all the circumstances and the claimant’s understanding of the claim. However, a costs order should not be made to deter a claimant from bringing future proceedings [*Smolarek v Tewin Bury Farm Hotel Ltd UKEAT/0031/17*]
39. With regard to the paying party's ability to pay, Rule 84 allows the tribunal to have regard to the paying party's ability to pay, but it does not have to, see *Jilley v Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust* [2008] UKEAT/0584/06 and *Single Homeless Project v Abu* [2013] UKEAT/0519/12. The fact that a party’s ability to pay is limited, does not, however, require the tribunal to assess a sum that is confined to an amount that he or she could pay see *Arrowsmith v Nottingham Trent University* which upheld a costs order against a claimant of very limited means and per Rimer LJ “her circumstances may well improve and no doubt she hopes that they will.” One

reason for not taking means into account is the failure of the paying party to provide sufficient and/or credible evidence of his or her means. Counsel for the respondent has also drawn the Tribunal's attention to the case of *Vaughan v LB of Newham [2013] IRLR 713* in support of the contention that a tribunal is entitled to make a costs award that the paying party cannot afford to pay.

40. VAT should not be included in a claim for costs if the receiving party is able to recover the VAT, (*Raggett v John Lewis plc [2012] IRLR 906 EAT*).

Conclusion

Power to Award Costs

41. Applying the Rules, the first question for the Tribunal to determine is whether the power to award costs has arisen.
42. At the hearing in August 2022, the Tribunal reached the findings set out on paragraphs 14.1 to 14.4 above and decided that “the claimant as an experienced litigant must have known that this claim had no reasonable prospect of success” and concluded that the claim “was not made in good faith but as part of a wider campaign as the respondent alleges”.
43. The findings at the hearing in August 2022 were that the claimant was unrealistic in applying for roles for which he had no relevant experience on a general basis, and specifically that this was the case in relation to the role of Technical Manager at Energy Systems Catapult for which he applied via the respondent and for which he was manifestly unqualified.
44. The Tribunal concluded in the liability judgement that the claimant has developed a system for applying for multiple roles and now concludes that the claimant has likewise developed a system for dealing with the Tribunal claims he brings. In the same way that he does not apply his mind to the suitability of the roles for which he applies, he does not apply his mind to the merits of the claims he brings. If a claim is struck out, he moves on to the next one; if a deposit order is made he does not pay; but if the claim is not struck out, and no deposit order is made, he will proceed with the claim without considering if there is any merit in it. This is what he has done on this occasion. He has not sifted or evaluated the evidence in this claim, and has not shown any interest in whether the claim has any reasonable prospects of success or not. He has persisted in sending multiple emails, with multiple attachments both to the respondent and to the Tribunal but the evidence supplied purportedly in support of his claim is in the main generic and a significant amount of it does not relate to this one specific claim.

45. The Claimant is a well-educated intelligent man with substantial litigation experience. It is to be expected that he should know that he is required to prove his case and that he would be required to provide relevant evidence to do so.
46. The claimant has received clear costs warnings both of a general nature from HHJ Taylor in the EAT in his AECOM appeal and specifically in relation to this case on 12 April 2021 from the respondent's solicitor.
47. We have found that this claim was not made in good faith and was made without any cogent evidence to support the claimant's contention that he had been discriminated against, and we are therefore satisfied that it was one which had no reasonable prospects of success.
48. The Tribunal is also satisfied that the claimant acted vexatiously and unreasonably both in applying for the role in the first place when he had no relevant experience and in bringing a claim for disability discrimination as part of an overall campaign or process of litigating but with no intention of assessing the genuine merits of this particular claim. This conclusion is based on the claimant's evidence as recorded in the original liability judgment. In the judgment of the Tribunal, the purpose of making 4643, job applications, of which this was one, was not because the claimant genuinely believed he was able to undertake each of those roles, including the role which is the subject matter of this claim, but to provide an opportunity to seek a settlement or to bring an employment tribunal claim whether or not there was any merit in such claim. This is effectively now the claimant's chosen career. The liability judgment and the Tribunal's judgment today is that the claim was "misconceived" and "not made in good faith".
49. The power to award costs has therefore arisen under Rule 76 (1) (b) and/or in the alternative under Rule 76 (1) (a).

Is a Costs Order Appropriate?

50. The Tribunal next considered whether a costs order was appropriate, being mindful of the fact that this is an exercise of discretion. In our judgement it is appropriate to make a costs order. The Tribunal is satisfied that by pursuing a claim which has no reasonable prospects of success and/or by acting vexatiously and unreasonably both in applying for a role for which he was not qualified, and/or bringing these proceedings, and/or continuing with the proceedings when the respondent's position was clear and persuasive and/or by the manner in which the proceedings were conducted, the claimant caused the respondent to incur legal costs which it should not have had to incur. The respondent sent the claimant a costs warning letter which he chose to ignore. The job application should not have been made and this claim

should not have been presented and the respondent should not have had to defend this claim.

51. In reaching the decision we have taken into account the medical information (both general and specific) which has been provided to us, including the report of the needs assessment undertaken on 17 March 2023. However, in our view the specific information which relates to the claimant does not make the decision to make a costs order inappropriate or unreasonable given the findings about the claimant's intellectual capacity and his manifest ability to understand the judgments made against him to the extent that he is able to adjust his CV and and/or his application process to take into account previous adverse judicial findings.

Amount of Costs Order

52. The respondent has submitted an updated costs schedule showing legal costs in the sum of £44,475.50 plus VAT. In the covering email dated 8 August 2023 attaching the updated schedule, the respondent's solicitor asked for a summary assessment capped at £20,000 to be made. Counsel for the respondent asked in the skeleton argument and in the hearing for costs to be assessed.
53. The evidence provided by the claimant as to his means is such that the Tribunal were unable to assess the claimant's overall financial situation and therefore do not take this into account in deciding on the amount of the award.
54. Notwithstanding the claimant's lack of co-operation, particularly in relation to his failure to provide documents in an ordered and helpful way, and the need for multiple preliminary hearings, the Tribunal conclude that reasonable costs for a two day hearing would be £18,000. No award for VAT is made on the basis that this is recoverable by the respondent.
55. The claimant is therefore ordered to pay the respondent the sum of £18,000 in costs.

**Employment Judge Halliday
10 December 2023**

Judgment sent to the parties:
15 December 2023

For the Tribunal

Public access to employment tribunal decisions

Judgments (apart from judgments under rule 52) and reasons for the judgments are published, in full, online at www.gov.uk/employment-tribunal-decisions shortly after a copy has been sent to the claimant(s) and respondent(s) in a case.