Department for Work & Pensions

Disability Confident Scheme

Transition Guide for Existing Disability Confident Members

26 November 2026

Contents

Introduction 3

What is changing? 4

Key things to know 4

A proportionate approach for employers of different sizes 5

What do I need to do now? 6

What Happens at My Current Level? 6

- Future Expectations – Level 1 (Foundation) 7
- Future Expectations – Level 2 (Practitioner) 7
- Future Expectations – Level 3 (Champion) 8
- Phase 1 – Introduction and Preparation 8
- December 2026 to 31 March 2027 8
- Phase 2 – Supported Verification Year 9
- Renewals between 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2028 9
- Phase 3 – Full Verification Arrangements 9
- From 1 April 2028 9
- What happens if I choose not to continue? 10

Find out more 10

Introduction

On 26 November 2026, Minister for Social Security and Disability announced reforms to the Disability Confident scheme which take effect from 01 April 2027.

This guide is for employers who are already Disability Confident members.

It explains what the reform of Disability Confident means for you, what happens next, and how you will be supported throughout the transition to the reformed scheme.

If you're not currently a Disability Confident member you can continue to join through existing arrangements and these arrangements will then come into effect for you in the same way as existing members.

For existing Disability Confident members, the transition to the reformed Disability Confident scheme will be guided by four principles:

- Existing members will be given advance notice of any changes affecting them.
- Employers will be supported to understand and adapt to new requirements.
- Organisations will not be expected to immediately meet new requirements introduced after they joined the scheme.
- Changes to the scheme will be introduced gradually to allow a fair and proportionate transition.

Changes will start to be implemented from 1 April 2027.

If you are already a Disability Confident member, your current membership remains valid.

You do not need to rejoin the scheme because reform has been announced, and your membership will not end automatically when the changes are introduced.

Changes will be introduced gradually over time, with advance notice, guidance and support to help you understand what is changing and what it means for you.

What is changing?

- Stronger requirements at higher levels
- Enhanced verification for Level 3.
- Greater focus on continuous improvement.
- Clearer progression through the scheme.
- Improved support and guidance for employers.

Key things to know

- Your current Disability Confident membership remains valid.
- You do not need to take any immediate action.
- You will receive advance notice of any changes affecting you.
- Transition arrangements will be introduced gradually.

- You will move to the new scheme when you are next due to renew after 1 April 2027.
- Support and guidance will be available throughout the transition period.
- Expectations will remain proportionate to the size and circumstances of your organisation.

A proportionate approach for employers of different sizes

The reformed scheme is designed to work for employers of all sizes.

Employers will demonstrate progress in different ways depending on their size, structure and circumstances. While some organisations may have extensive experience of recruitment, workplace adjustments or managing sickness absence, others may encounter these situations less frequently.

The reformed scheme recognises both experience and preparedness. Employers can demonstrate progress through clear plans, manager confidence and readiness to respond effectively when situations arise.

Being a smaller organisation is not a disadvantage.

What do I need to do now?

No immediate action is required.

For now, you should:

- Continue meeting the commitments associated with your current Disability Confident level.
- Maintain your existing membership.
- Familiarise yourself with information about the upcoming changes.
- Consider how Disability Confident is managed within your organisation and whether current arrangements remain effective.
- Look out for future communications about transition arrangements.

If you would like to prepare in advance, you may wish to:

- Review the disability inclusion activity already taking place within your organisation.
- Consider how well managers are equipped to recruit, retain and support disabled employees.
- Identify existing examples that demonstrate your commitment to disability inclusion.

What Happens at My Current Level?

As the reformed scheme is introduced, you will receive information about future progression expectations, available support and any changes that affect you. You

will be given time to prepare before new requirements take effect.

Below is an overview of the transition arrangements through the phases by level to help you understand what you need to do and by when.

Future Expectations – Level 1 (Foundation)

Under the reformed scheme, Level 1 will become a time-limited entry level designed to support progression and continuous improvement.

Employers will normally have up to two years to progress from Level 1 to Level 2. During this period, members will have access to guidance, tools and support to help build confidence and prepare for progression.

Members who choose not to progress to Level 2 will leave the scheme at the end of their two-year membership period. They will receive a support pack before their membership ends.

Further details will be published before these changes take effect.

Future Expectations – Level 2 (Practitioner)

As a current Level 2 member you will retain your existing membership status.

Level 2 will continue to recognise employers that are taking positive action to attract, recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

As the reformed scheme is introduced, you will receive guidance explaining any changes to expectations, evidence requirements and available support. You will be given advance notice of any future changes affecting your membership.

Further implementation information will be published ahead of transition.

Future Expectations – Level 3 (Champion)

As a current Level 3 member you will retain your existing membership status.

Level 3 will continue to represent the highest level of Disability Confident membership.

As part of the reforms, the verification process will be strengthened to provide greater confidence that Level 3 employers are demonstrating leadership in disability inclusion and delivering meaningful outcomes.

The new verification arrangements will be introduced gradually and aligned with existing membership cycles.

Existing Level 3 members will receive support throughout the transition period and advance notice of any new requirements.

Phase 1 – Introduction and Preparation

December 2026 to 31 March 2027

During this period, existing Level 3 members will retain their membership status.

Employers will receive:

- Information about the enhanced verification framework.
- Guidance on future expectations.
- Tools and supporting materials.
- Opportunities to become familiar with the revised approach before formal verification begins.

Phase 2 – Supported Verification Year

Renewals between 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2028

The first year of enhanced verification activity will operate as a supported transition period.

Verification activity will focus on learning, support and continuous or sustained improvement. Where opportunities for development are identified, employers will receive constructive feedback and signposting to relevant guidance and resources.

Phase 3 – Full Verification Arrangements

From 1 April 2028

The enhanced verification framework will become fully operational.

At this stage:

- Verification requirements will apply consistently across Level 3 members.

- Employers will be expected to demonstrate that they meet the published criteria.
- Verification outcomes will inform ongoing membership decisions.
- Guidance and support will continue to be available.

By this point, employers will have had advance notice of requirements, access to supporting resources and experience of the verification process through the supported transition period.

What happens if I choose not to continue?

Participation in Disability Confident remains voluntary.

While we expect many employers to continue their Disability Confident journey, organisations that choose not to continue their membership will have access to information and resources to help them continue building inclusive workplaces and supporting disabled people in work.

Find out more

The following documents provide further information about Disability Confident reform:

- Disability Confident Changes at a Glance
- Future Level Criteria and Expectations

As further implementation details are confirmed, employers will be notified through Disability Confident communication channels.