Department for Work & Pensions

Disability Confident Scheme

What does Disability Confident Reform mean for jobseekers and employees

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Why are we reforming Disability Confident

Disabled jobseekers, employees and stakeholders told us that it is not always clear what Disability Confident membership means in practice, or what they can expect from an employer displaying the Disability Confident badge. Changes to the scheme are designed to provide greater clarity, consistency, and confidence in what membership represents.

When applying for a role with a Disability Confident employer, or working for one, people often wanted to know:

- What can I expect from this employer?
- How are they supporting disabled people?
- What makes them different from an employer that is not a member?

Historically, Disability Confident membership signalled a commitment to disability inclusion, but the experience and support available could vary significantly between employers.

What can I expect from the scheme now?

Changes to the scheme introduce clearer expectations at every level, making it easier to understand what Disability

Confident employers are expected to do and how they are expected to develop over time.

The changes are designed to provide greater confidence that employers displaying the Disability Confident badge are actively working to recruit, retain and support disabled people. They also place greater emphasis on continuous and sustained improvement, ensuring that employers are encouraged to build on their progress, and maintain their high standards, rather than stand still.

If you're a jobseeker or employee, this should mean greater clarity about what Disability Confident membership represents and should give you increased confidence that participating employers are taking meaningful action to create more inclusive workplaces.

While employers will continue to take different approaches depending on their size, sector and circumstances, the badge should increasingly signal that an employer is:

- Actively working to recruit, retain and support disabled people.
- Meeting clear expectations appropriate to their level of membership.
- Committed to continuous improvement rather than a one-off commitment.
- Seeking to understand and respond to the experiences of disabled people.

- Being more open about their disability inclusion activity and progress.

The aim is not that every Disability Confident employer looks exactly the same, but that there is greater consistency in what Disability Confident membership represents.

So what does this really mean?

The reformed scheme places a greater emphasis on:

- Recruitment and onboarding – Employers will be working to make recruitment and onboarding processes more inclusive and accessible for disabled candidates.
- Supporting People in Work – Employers will be creating working environments where employees can thrive, access support and request workplace adjustments where needed.
- Managing absences and Return to Work – Employers will be supporting employees during periods of ill health and helping them return to work successfully where appropriate.

These themes now sit at the heart of every level of the reformed scheme.

How will Employees Voices be Heard?

Employers will be encouraged to gather feedback from employees, and where possible those who apply for their

vacancies, reflect on those experiences and use those insights to improve workplace practices.

Employers should seek to create opportunities for employees to share their experiences in ways that feel safe, constructive and accessible. This may include the use of anonymous feedback approaches, pulse surveys and other mechanisms that allow employees to contribute honestly without feeling under pressure to disclose personal information or concerns publicly.

The aim is not to collect information for its own sake, but to ensure that employee experiences help inform meaningful workplace improvements.

At the highest levels of the scheme, employee insight will also contribute to verification and assurance activities, helping to ensure that assessments are informed by lived experience as well as organisational policies and processes.

By placing greater emphasis on employee voice, the reformed scheme seeks to ensure that disability inclusion is shaped not only by what employers say they do, but also by the experiences of the people they employ.

What Disability Confident reform doesn’t mean

The Disability Confident badge is not a guarantee that every disabled person will have the same experience. Creating an inclusive workplace takes ongoing effort, and employers will be at different stages of that journey.

Some organisations may have formal policies and specialist teams, while others may rely more on direct conversations and personalised support. The scheme does not expect every employer to take the same approach. What matters is that disabled people are treated fairly, listened to and supported to succeed at work.

What happens next?

The reforms will be introduced gradually over time, starting on 1 April 2027.

Employers that are already members of Disability Confident will move into the reformed scheme over time. This will happen as their membership comes up for renewal, rather than all at once.

Disabled people will continue to play an important role in shaping the future of the scheme. Feedback, research and ongoing engagement will help ensure Disability Confident continues to develop in ways that reflect real experiences and needs.

The success of Disability Confident will not be measured by how many employers join the scheme, but by the difference it can make to experiences, opportunities and outcomes of disabled people. The reforms are intended to strengthen confidence in what the scheme represents today while creating a foundation for further improvement in the future.