



# Disability & Employment Report 2020

**ridi**

Recruitment Industry  
Disability Initiative

**AWARDS 2020**

**FINALIST**

# 2020, what a year!

And a year when helping people with a disability gain employment has never been higher on our agenda...

Remote working, flexible working, working from home – whatever term you use, we are hoping that organisations will realise that these options create more opportunities for people with a disability. Candidates can be just as valuable from home, as they are in the office and it will be interesting to see how organisations embrace more change on 2021.

Operating within the Inventum Group, Wells Tobias were selected to partner with City law firms, tech start-ups and financial services organisations on active recruitment campaigns to help increase the opportunities that are available to those with a disability.

Our work continues as we engage with our candidates, allowing them to be honest and authentic about who they are, and helping to educate companies on how an inclusive workforce can bring true value, over and above the bottom line.

In 2021, we will continue to push these conversations, hoping to bring about yet more positive conclusions.

Heather Lawson (Director)  
Wells Tobias - Part of the Inventum Group



In line with our position as a Disability Confident Employer (more on this later...) we encourage candidates to be as open as possible in regards to who they are and how they live, this simply helps us to find them the right job.

We felt we had too few candidates who informed us that they had a disability, especially compared to the national statistics which show that...

**19%** of people in the UK are disabled

**49%** of disabled people work

**88%** of non-disabled people work

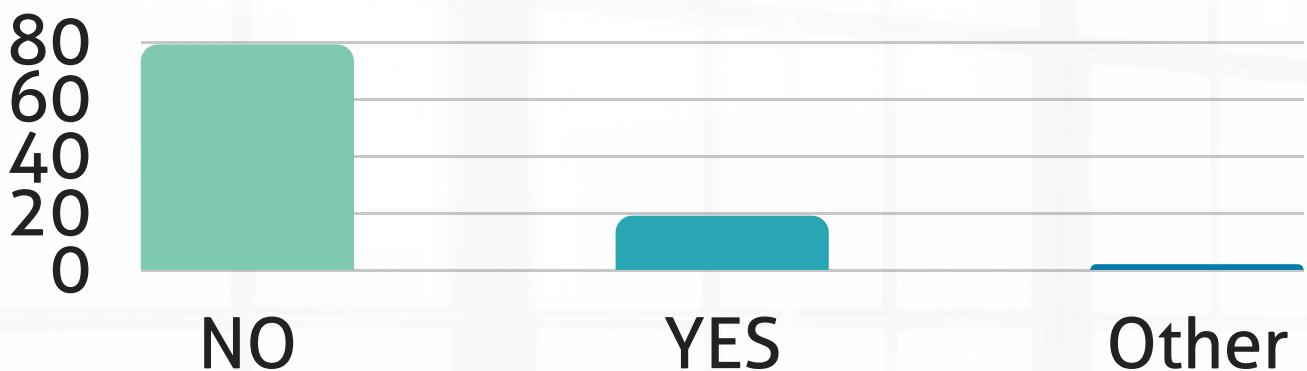
**16%** of working age people are disabled

NATIONAL STATISTICS

So, we surveyed our candidates and asked them five questions around disability...

### Question 1

## Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

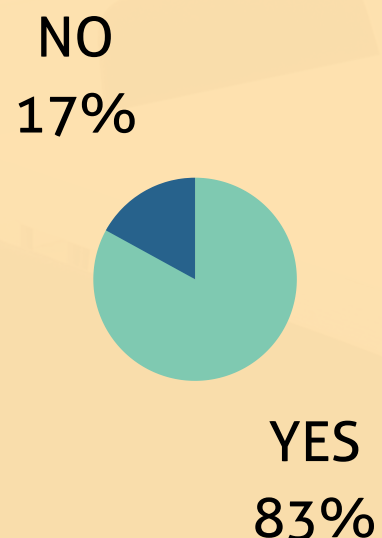


This was a surprising number yet this is perfectly in line with the national statistics.

We wanted to find out how many of these 19% talked openly about their disability during the hiring process...

### Question 2

If yes, did you go on to share it with your employer once you were in the job?





### Question 3

Have you ever felt that you've been denied a role because of your disability?



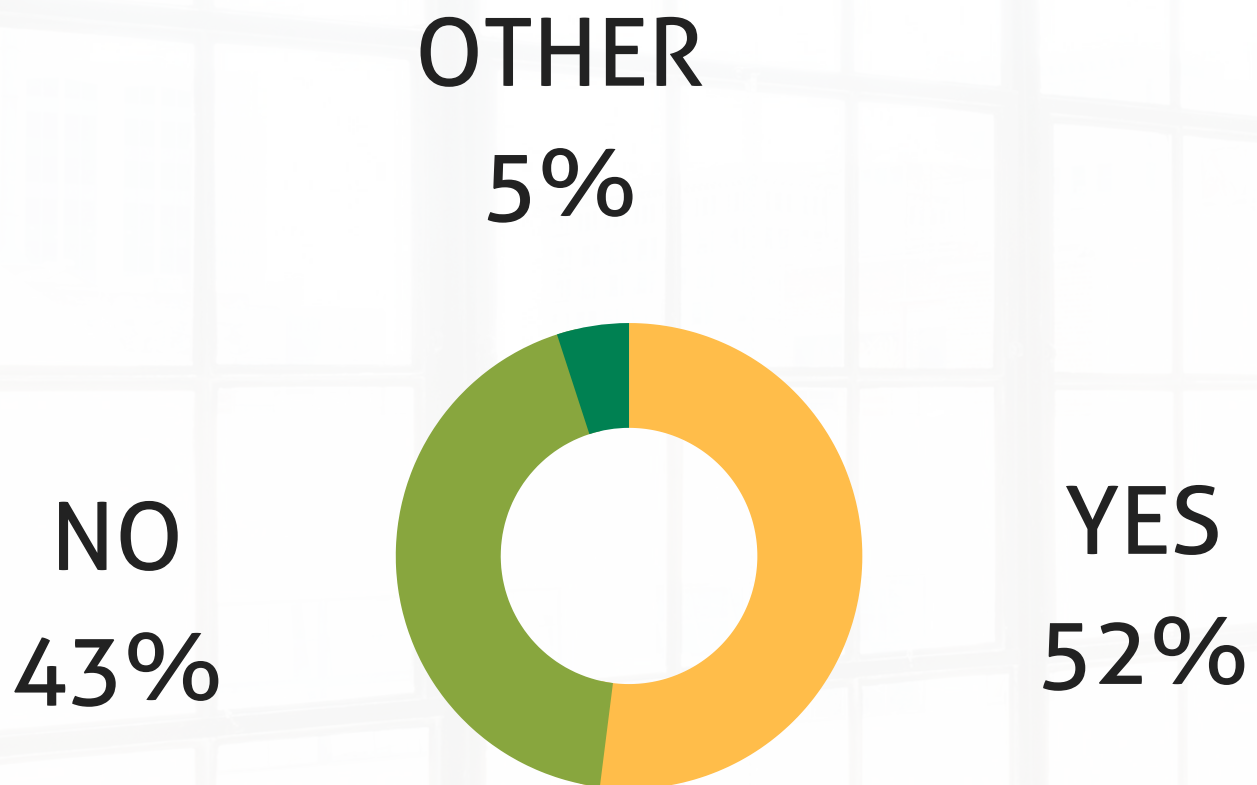
Of the 1% who ticked OTHER,  
one commented "sometimes"

"I have been unfairly dismissed from work due to disability - I received some compensation"

"I've never revealed my disability and as such cannot determine if I've been denied a role because of this.  
- It is not a physical impairment"

#### Question 4

When applying for jobs, have you ever chosen NOT to share your disability with the employer?



Legally, applicants are not obliged to disclose a disability when applying for a job.

However, the fact such a large percentage aren't choosing to do so could be telling and indicate a genuine concern that they may be discriminated against.

Wells Tobias is part of the government's Disability Confident Scheme which is designed to help get those with a disability into work by encouraging businesses and helping to educate them about employing staff with disabilities.



We asked our candidates about the potential impact of this scheme...

#### Question 5

If you knew a potential employer was linked to this scheme would you be more likely to tell them about your disability during the application process?

**YES**  
**89%**

**NO**  
**11%**

# Our candidate's thoughts...

"At my current workplace, my colleagues make comments about my disability but this is not taken seriously when I raise this issue with my manager. I have been to interviews and been told I cannot be employed due to my disability and have always been treated different at work"

"Sometimes I feel that it's bad to share the fact that I have a mental illness because of the stigma involved that despite all efforts to remove, is still there..."

"I find my disability is treated with disdain from management, no promotions and repeatedly as asking me to do the same things I've said I can't "

"Disability is something I saw as a disadvantage especially in the workplace so when I learnt I had dyslexia and dyscalculia I had a fear of being accepted in the workplace especially in law when the standard is so high. I am happy Wells Tobias is addressing this..."



# Survey Conclusions

From our survey, it's clear that candidates withhold information about their disabilities from potential employers for fear of being discriminated against.

It is also clear that many organisations currently have employees with disabilities that they are unaware of and therefore they're unable to provide reasonable adjustments for them, or help support them in the workplace.

We created this survey to raise awareness amongst staff and our clients. We want to encourage a more open conversation about disability and a more open, inclusive working environment for all.



**Wells Tobias**

Part of The Inventum Group

# Our work with RIDI

Wells Tobias and the Inventum Group were introduced to the outstanding work of the Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDI) by former Guidant Global Managing Director, current Rullion Managing Director and RIDI executive member, Mel Forbes.

This fantastic organisation has one purpose: to break down the barriers faced by the millions of disabled people who are entering or progressing through the job market.

They work with employers and the recruitment industry, and provide the tools and knowledge to help disabled job seekers find the right employment opportunities.

We were inspired, and vowed there and then to get involved.

We are proud sponsors and partners to RIDI and have been commended for our work helping disabled job seekers new opportunities and provide education and support to our clients to make positive steps in their recruitment programs.

We remain passionate about reducing employment barriers whenever we find them.

We are part of the government's Disability Confident Scheme and run our own programs in partnership with our clients.

In 2020 we also launched a scheme encouraging and supporting employers to hire neurodiverse talent, in particular, those with autistic spectrum conditions.



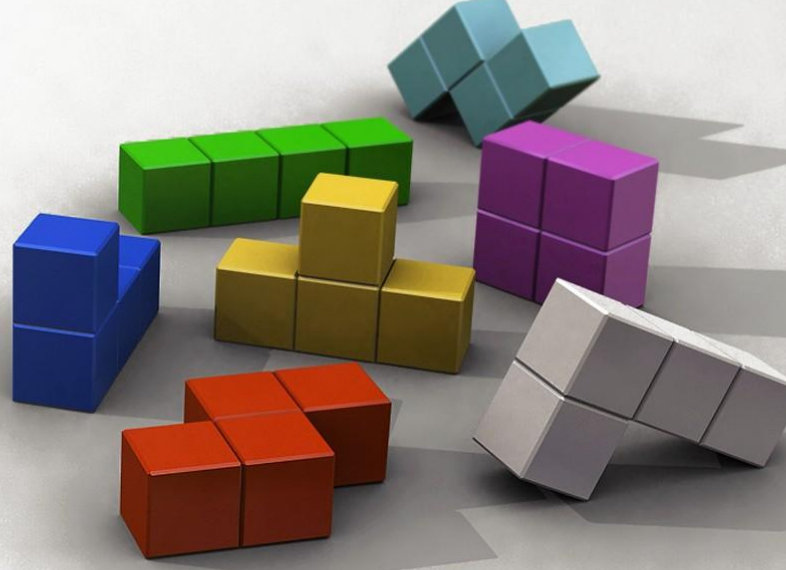
Inventum Group Founders  
Adam Tobias & Joe Wells at the  
annual RIDI Awards



# Case Study

## Where positive discrimination works

*By Heather Lawson*



This year I have been lucky enough to be instructed as a recruiter, by law firms, to help them create more opportunities for people with disabilities. I can't tell you how delighted I was to get involved in these projects and I learned some interesting lessons along the way that I want to share. The people that I had on interview with these firms had varying disabilities, from partial sight to mental illness, from neurodiverse conditions to partial hearing - and, they were all candidates that had registered with me previously yet had initially decided not to disclose their disability.

As the vacancies I was working on had been ring-fenced so that only those people with a disability could be put forward these candidates had to disclose their disability to me to in essence, qualify to be put forward (disability being the one protected characteristic you can legally use to positively discriminate). This made for some very interesting conversations, especially as one of the candidates who was actually offered a position was someone I had placed previously into another role.

So I challenged these individuals about their non-disclosure previously and the conversations all led to two major conclusions:

- 1. They did not want to be defined by their disability. The majority of the candidates all used the same language "the disability is part of me, it is part of who I am, I do not want to be defined by it"
- 2. They had not disclosed the disability previously as they did not want to be discriminated against

Let's go back to point 1... They didn't want to be defined by their disability, yet they were responding to communications about a role that was purely open to those people with a disability – is that not a little hypocritical?



On asking why they had chosen to come forward and apply for the positions the overwhelming response was that they felt that this employer was being openly supportive about disability, and they felt that this would make for a better working culture. Yes, they knew the firms would make reasonable adjustments for them individually, but more important to them was the fact that the firms' open policy on creating opportunities for those with a disability said more about them as a whole. The candidates felt this approach was 'unusual', 'ground-breaking' and showed that organisations are not just paying lip-service to rubber-stamp disability schemes.

Point 2 needed some closer scrutiny... With our equality and discrimination laws here in the UK, do people who have a disability really feel that disclosure of their condition could jeopardise their career? – the overwhelming answer was 'Yes'.

I have worked in legal recruitment for 29 years, and I have seen some major leaps in terms of firms' recruitment processes, however, there is still work to do! But what sort of work am I talking about? I think each firm's approach to the hire of staff with a disability is different. Some are very au fait with the potential fears that often arise, such as the cost of adjustments, or managing concerns about absenteeism and productivity and how it may impact other workers. Other firms are just beginning to make headway in this area and are coming up against the 'the uncomfortability factor' – people not knowing what to say, how to interact, talk to and work with disabled people.

These fears are easily overcome, and once employees and employers understand the true value of recruiting disabled people, they will start to reap the benefits of...

- Improved innovation and problem solving
- Being able to hire for specific skill sets
- Higher morale across the organisation
- A wider pool of talent
- Increased productivity
- Reduced sickness absence
- Improved retention
- Better safety
- Enhanced reputation
- CSR
- Overcoming groupthink



As a recruitment consultant, I have always seen my position as quite privileged. What I mean by that is that I can present candidates to a law firm with a substantial argument as to why I am putting them forward and the added value they could bring. I can have an impact on changing someone's career when their CV might otherwise have been rejected.

I have tried this approach with disabled candidates with no effect. Last year I tried to help a law student get work experience, he had cerebral palsy and was a wheelchair user to– and I failed. Not one law firm (out of 200!) came back to me and even a LinkedIn campaign fell on deaf ears.

I want to change this...

Disability is an area I feel really passionate about. Wells Tobias are partners and sponsors with the Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDI). Candidates trust me to discuss their conditions in complete confidence. It seems that the stars are aligning and all I need to do is speak to more law firms about their recruitment opportunities for people with disabilities and ensure that the amazing talent I work with is supported and nurtured in a positive work environment, how hard can that be?

As with each piece of recruitment I complete, only one person can get the job, so I have a number of candidates with varying forms of disability who are keen to work for an employer who is supportive of their needs, and also understands the value that they can bring to an organisation.

The person who filled the ring-fenced position has been given additional staff to work for and has become an integral part of the team – she is flying in her new role, and hearing that both employer and the employee are extremely happy only goes to prove the positive impact that hiring people with a disability can have on your business.



If you would like to have a conversation with me about the possibility of working on ring-fenced opportunities or would just like to discuss this subject in more detail, then please get in touch with me...

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