

# Employers for Disability NI

## 2022 Annual Report of Activities

In 2022 we have continued to deliver a range of services for our member employers, their disabled employees, managers and colleagues. There has remained a high demand for online training and we have delivered many face-to-face sessions as well.

We would like to thank our member employers for their ongoing commitment to disability good practice.

### 1.0 Member Support Services

#### a) Disability Advice Line

This is a core part of the service for member employers and their employees. We have answered many queries from disabled employees, line managers and colleagues. Given the diversity of disabilities and the nature of employment, there was a huge range in the types of issues raised. The following are just some examples:

- Advice on appropriate disability language for monitoring purposes
- Information on supporting people with cystic fibrosis
- Advice on managing disability absence for a person with mental health issues
- Advice for a person with anxiety in the workplace
- Signposting to autism resources
- Ongoing support and advice for autistic employee including communication and adjustments
- Advice on devising training specific to needs
- Advice on devising training specific to needs
- Supporting person with anxiety to help identify
- Statistics around disability in the workplace
- Advice on supporting employee with dyslexia
- Advice on accessing assessment for employee potentially with autism
- Advice on how to raise disability-related issues with employee
- Advice on performance management issues for disabled employee
- Advice on workplace adjustments for an employee with PTSD
- Advice on adjustments to an interview for a person with a number of neurodiverse conditions
- Advice on managing interpersonal communication difficulties due to underlying disability
- Advice on supporting an employee to overcome disability-related performance issues through adjustments
- Advice on communication adjustments and practice for an autistic employee
- List of assessors who identify neurodiverse conditions
- Sources of support for employee with mental health issues

- Information on supporting employees with anxiety
- Information on supporting employees with dyslexia
- Information on disability hate crime
- Comments and suggestions on a Disability Adjustment Passport
- Advice on guaranteed interview, essential-v- non-essential criteria
- Guidance on assessing genuine H&S
- Seeking expert advice for person with hearing loss
- Adjustments for a person who has dyslexia and dyspraxia
- Adjustments during recruitment for a person with epilepsy (waiving criteria)
- Information on guaranteed interview scheme
- Good practice in sick leave for disabled employees
- Advice on e-learning programme, supporting “vulnerable” people
- Advice on language around neurodiversity
- Comments on e-learning programme on neurodiversity

#### **b) Employee Support and Resolution Service**

Employers for Disability NI provides a free, confidential resolution service employing mediation and conciliation approaches. This involves consulting with all key parties (line manager, disabled employee, HR, OH as required), facilitating discussion and advising on how issues may be resolved. This practice is informed by adjustments, disability positive practice and a balanced approach. Depending on the complexity of the issue, this can be done via telephone, email or in face-to-face meetings. The key aim of the service is to support managers, colleagues and disabled employees to avoid disability discrimination and facilitate a problem-solving approach. This is a unique service and is only available to Employers for Disability NI member employers.

#### **c) Disability Positive Accreditation**

This was launched in June 2022 and to date five organisations achieved accreditation with a number of other organisations in the process of completing the Disability Positive Audit. This will be an ongoing initiative.

#### **d) Website**

Many news articles, information and links to resources were added throughout the year to the website, including information about managing staff wellbeing and supporting disabled employees whether following working in the office, home or hybrid model. Ongoing updates will ensure this is a valuable source of information to member employers and others.

#### **e) Member Update Bulletin**

Following each Board Meeting, update bulletins have been sent to member employers to ensure they are aware of our ongoing programme of activities.

#### **f) Member News and Information Updates**

Members have received regular email updates to inform them about resources, stories of interest, videos, case studies, member activities etc.

### **g) Jobs Bulletin Board**

This is a popular web page on our website. Many vacancies have been added and circulated to disability organisations over the past year. We hope to develop this service further in the upcoming year.

### **h) Mind & Body Service**

Our social enterprise, Mind & Body Therapy, offers therapeutic massage and cognitive behavioural therapy to member employees and members of the public at a discounted rate or free of charge when part of a funded programme. All income is donated to Employers for Disability NI.

### **i) Supporting Members' Initiatives**

Staff participated in members' working groups:

- NI Civil Service Disability Working Group
- BHSCT Disability Steering Group
- EA Stakeholder Disability Consultation Group
- Advisory panel of Harkin Summit

### **j) Harkin International Disability Employment Summit**

Employers for Disability NI participated in a panel to bring the International Employment Summit to NI. Angela Getty, Chair, represented us at the event that took place in June 2022.

## **2.0 Events**

### **a) Training/Awareness Events**

There were 55 sessions delivered to organisations over the past year. The majority of these have been free to members as part of their membership and it is great to see members benefitting from this. All sessions are tailored to suit member needs.

- 3 December, NICS staff disability network - sharing good practice 1.5hrs
- 7 December, Ulster University, Hearing Loss, 1.5hrs
- 7 December, NICS, 1.5hrs
- 8 December, BHSCT, Stress Less, 1.5hrs
- 18 January, NICS, Mental Health Awareness, 1.5hrs
- 25 January, NICS, Physical Disability, 1.5hrs
- 1 February, NICS, Hidden/Non-visible Disability, 1.5 hrs
- 8 February, NICS, Hearing Loss, 1.5 hrs
- 10 February, WHSCT, Disability Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 15 February, NICS, Sleep Well for Life, 1.5 hrs
- 2 March, Mid-Ulster Council, Autism Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 9 March, Mid-Ulster Autism Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 10 March, BBC, Hidden/Non-visible Disability 1.5 hrs
- 15 March, QUB, Autism Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 23 March, BBC, Neurodiversity, 1.5 hrs

- 29 March, NICS Autism, 1.5 hrs
- 31 March, HIS Carer's project launch event – all day
- 5 April, **free member event**, Hidden/Non-visible Disability, 1.5 hrs
- 7 April, BBC, Being a Disability Positive Manager, 1.5 hrs
- 3 May, COPNI, Hidden/Non-visible Disability, 1.5 hrs
- 17 May, HIS Carers, Stress Less, 1.5 hrs
- 20 May, HIS Carers, Stress Less, 3 hrs
- 24 May, WHSCT, Disability Awareness, 1.5 hrs
- 24 June and 5 July, QUB, Neurodiversity, 1.5 hrs
- 28 June, Police Ombudsman, Neurodiversity, 1.5 hrs
- 22, 24 and 26 August, NI Public Services Ombudsman, Disability Awareness
- 30 August, Autism Awareness, Cambridge House School
- 5 September, Police Ombudsman for NI, Neurodiversity Awareness
- 15 September, QUB, Autism Awareness
- 16 September and 29 November, Western HSC Trust, Disability Awareness
- 20 September, Southern HSC Trust, Disability Awareness
- 22 September, Education Authority, Supporting Employees' Mental Health
- 26 September, Invest NI, Disability Positive Training and Accreditation for employees
- 27 September (Autism), 11 October (ADD-ADHD and Dyspraxia), 25 October (Dyslexia and Dyscalculia), 8 November (Sight Loss), 22 November (Hidden/Non-visible Disability), NICS
- 5 October, Education Authority, Hidden/Non-visibility Disability Awareness
- 6 October and 9 November, Belfast City Council, Disability Awareness
- 21 October, NILGOS, Disability Awareness
- 26 October, Autism/ADD-ADHD Awareness, 16 November, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia, LRA
- 3 November, Hearing Loss Awareness, 8 November, Hidden/Non-visibility Disability Awareness, 10 November, Neurodiversity Awareness (Autism and ADD-ADHD), 17 November, Neurodiversity Awareness (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia), Ulster University
- 17 November, Government Legal Services NI, Supporting Disabled Employees in Returning to a Hybrid Workplace
- 30 November, Ulster University, Disability Awareness
- 2 December, AGM, Equality Commission for NI, Disability Case Law Update

## **b) Training/Awareness Events Attended**

- Mental Health First Aid – 2 days
- Mental Health First Aid Training for Trainers – 3 days
- ADUK, Assistance Dogs
- Introduction to Safeguarding
- EC Mental Health Charter & Good Practice
- Aware Mood Matters
- CBT - several courses have been undertaken as part of CPD

### 3.0 Administrative Matters

#### a) Fundraising Initiatives:

- **Head Injury Support Newry:** We have linked with Head Injury Support for a two-year project supporting the mental health of head injury survivors and carers.
- **Leonard Cheshire Grad Employ Programme:** This programme was a great success for those employers and graduates who participated. Consultation calls took place with employers offering advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments and good practice.

#### b) Board Membership

A sincere word of thanks is due to the Board Members, drawn from across our membership, who have provided ongoing support for Employers for Disability NI staff, generating ideas and bringing enthusiasm and commitment to the work of the organisation. Without their assistance, the work of this organisation would not be possible.

#### c) New Members

We were very pleased to welcome new members this year, Labour Relations Agency and Southern Health and Social Care Trust and North West Regional College.