



National Express - becoming a Disability Confident Leader

Who we are

The National Express UK Bus business is part of the wider National Express Group and has a diverse workforce of over 7,000 employees. The greater proportion of our employees are not office based, as they work in operational roles to either drive our buses or maintain our vehicles. These employees typically work shift patterns which vary to cover the business needs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Overview and objectives

National Express is an inclusive organisation and we are experienced at making reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process.

We have signed up to the Disability Confident scheme and will offer an interview to candidates with disabilities or long-term conditions who meet the minimum criteria for the role.

Disability Confident is creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

Being Disability Confident is a unique opportunity to lead the way in your community, and you might just discover someone your business cannot do without.

It was developed by employers and disabled people's representatives to make it rigorous but easily accessible, particularly for smaller businesses.

Approach

The Disability Confident scheme is voluntary and has been developed by employers and disabled people's representatives. The Disability Confident scheme has 3 levels that have been designed to support businesses on their Disability Confident journey.

Since becoming part of the Disability Confident scheme, we have introduced the following:

- Our face-to-face interviews are always conducted in accessible buildings
- As part of everybody's onboarding process when they start work with us, National Express asks new employees about any disabilities they have and what assistance and adjustments they need
- Before working with eg. a recruitment agency partner, National Express highlights our commitment to disability confidence and question them on their D+I policies, procedures and culture.
- National Express expects all its employees to have carried our Unconscious Bias training. Anybody who hasn't done it is not permitted to take part in any recruitment processes.

We have also made sure that our colleagues are aware of disabilities when dealing with our customers, and how some disabilities may be hidden too. It is important that disability awareness is something that we embrace at the recruitment stage but also within the communities we serve.

Bus driver training includes 7 hours of disability awareness training as part of their core skills.

This covers:

- An understanding of the term disability
- Recognising some of the common disabilities
- Know how to deal with passengers appropriately who have a disability
- Have a clearer understanding of your responsibilities as a PCV driver.

Results and conclusion

Over 7.7 million people of working age in the UK are disabled or have a health condition. Historically there has been a significant gap between the proportion of disabled people employed compared with non-disabled people. (*source .gov.uk*)

We realise that we can access even more quality candidates by making changes in our business. We can also gain more skills, talent and a better understanding of our customer base. Although this is the beginning of our journey with the Disability Confidence scheme we know that this is going to bring benefits to our company and help us further develop as a company that prides itself on its D&I credentials.

Some further adjustments we've already made in a bit more detail:

- As part of the recruitment process we give candidates the opportunity to make us aware that they have a disability on the application form. This provides individuals with the opportunity of requesting adjustments to support them through the process.

Reasonable adjustments are put in place where required, such as longer interview times to give applicants extra time to answer questions, sign-language interpreters provided. Since Covid-19, we now offer virtual and telephone interviews at a time best suited to the candidate. Our face-to-face interviews are always conducted in accessible buildings. Extra support on the day in relation to accessibility can be arranged if required.

- Candidates book their initial interviews themselves, choosing a slot which suits them best. They can request any form of additional support when they book their interview.
- As part of everybody's onboarding process when they start work with us, National Express asks new employees about any disabilities they have and what assistance and adjustments they need.
- National Express uses an external occupational health provider who advise us on how to procure eg relevant and appropriate services and equipment, and they carry out need assessments for us. National Express is committed to ensuring that the adjustments required are made swiftly to enable the employee to continue with their job role as seamlessly as is possible.
- National Express works hard to remove any barriers that are identified at the earliest opportunity to ensure that those individuals with a disability feel confident that they will be treated with fairness, respect and that they will have equality of opportunity.
- National Express promotes our vacancies via DWP, who work with agencies and programmes aimed at disabled people eg Restart scheme.
- Specialist software is offered to people who require to enable them to record meetings and training sessions, also enabling them to use speech to text. All presentations can be changed to dyslexia-friendly colour and font if requested.
- Braille on the lift buttons for our visually impaired colleagues and visitors
- Push pad facilities on the front office doors
- Accessible buildings
- Flashing lights for the fire alarms
- Disabled call points on the stairs
- Evac chairs on the stairs
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for those that may require assistance in an emergency to leave the building
- Voice over facility in lifts
- Extra wide doors

- We support individuals who require adaptations to their working environment due to a disability or long-term condition, including the provision of laptops, earphones, leg and arm rests, specialist chairs, ergonomic mouse and keyboards, screen readers and other hardware. Software is also provided to support those individuals with sight or hearing impairments (sensory disabilities).
- Assessments are carried out by an independent assessor procured through our occupational health provider. Furthermore reasonable adjustments can be put in place where required for all recruitment and interview processes.
- We provide an external free confidential Employee Assistance Programme.
- National Express works hard to ensure that all employees feel confident in their ability to speak to WMP about their disability. We provide an external free confidential Employee Assistance Programme. National Express takes part and encourages involvement with national days of action such as 'Time to Talk' Day (every 1st February).
- For several years, we have taken part in Department for Transport's disability awareness campaign It's Everybody's Journey.
- We promote our membership of the Disability Confident scheme at all relevant meetings and events, as well as in publicity material and press releases.
- National Express has appointed a D&I Council to deliver the strategy, including dignity at work training. We also have a D&I Sounding Board which is made up of 30 colleagues from across the UK businesses.
- All employees are supported throughout their career with National Express. We have access to a permanent external occupational health provider.
- All employees with a disability or long-term condition have the opportunity to declare it when they start their journey with us.
- We carry out return-to-work interviews as a matter of course. This allows a conversation between the manager and the individual to discuss any concerns that the individual may have and enables the manager to put any temporary (or permanent if deemed necessary) adjustments in place.
- We regularly signpost our employees to our free confidential external Employee Assistance Programme (provided by Aviva Care First). This includes a Mental Wellbeing App. We also provide NX Get Talking - which is an online webinar and a wellbeing toolbox available to all staff.
- National Express offers the services of an external occupational health provider (Medigold). They provide local ergonomic and workplace assessments for individuals.

