



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Self-disclosure in the Workplace Report



Ionad Sármhaitheasa DCU
um Éagsúlacht agus Cuimsiú
DCU Centre of Excellence
for Diversity and Inclusion

In partnership with





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Contents

About the Founder	02
The DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion	03
Introduction to Indeed	04
Biographies	05
Introduction	06
Research Report	08
Encouraging Self-Disclosure	10
a) Context of personal data collection	10
b) Purpose of data collection	12
c) Process of self-disclosure	14
d) Issues arising	19
A Case in Practice	21
Positive outcomes from self-disclosure by employees	22
a) Awareness-raising	22
b) Extension of facilities	23
c) Procedural innovations	24
d) Identification of managerial training needs	25
Research Conclusion	26
Toolkits	27
1: Tips for Successful Self-identification at Work	27
2: Accomodations Passport - Critical Conversations for Managers	28
3: Sample of questions for engagement surveys	29
4: Where to get candidates - DCU Ability Programme	30
Specialist Organisations / Access to Candidates	32
Government Schemes and Grants	33

About the Founder



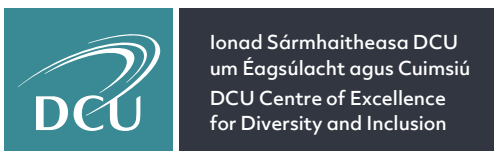
Sandra Healy

Sandra Healy is the Founding Director of the DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion. Before moving to DCU, Sandra held a number of leadership positions spanning 20 years in the telecoms industry. Over the past thirteen years Sandra has championed and driven Diversity and Inclusion practice in Irish Industry and contributes to the work of the Ibec Diversity Forum, CWIT and 30% Club Ireland. In 2020 Sandra was appointed to the Expert Group for the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality in Ireland, led by Dr Catherine Day.

Diversity and inclusion is a core focus for many organisations and the DCU Centre of Excellence was established to assist them on this journey by providing access to the very latest developments in academic research, insights and tools to drive change across the organisation. The Centre is a central hub for research, advice and knowledge exchange on diversity and inclusion and we welcome industry partnerships such as this project with Indeed.

This important collaboration with our founding partner Indeed is a real example of how we can tackle some of the more challenging aspects of workplace inclusion. The research was designed to explore the means by which employees could be encouraged to self-disclose information related to disabilities at work, and to understand what organisations could do to foster an environment that supports self-disclosure.

Sandry Healy,
DCU Centre of Excellence Director



www.dcu.ie/hr/coe_diversity_inclusion.shtml

The DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion

The DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion was established in June 2018.

The DCU Centre is a central hub for research, advice and knowledge exchange on diversity and inclusion. The Centre creates a bridge between DCU's talent, industry bodies and specialist groups, helping organisations build cultures of inclusion by providing access to the very latest in academic research, insights and tools on diversity and inclusion. It supports organisations in all aspects of their diversity and inclusion journeys.

A core element of the Centre is a membership community of academic experts, informed practitioners, thought leaders and networks that research and produce best practices in workplace diversity and inclusion.

Our Purpose, Vision, Mission and Values

 <h3>Values</h3> <p>We live our values of integrity, trust, open collaboration and ambition.</p>	 <h3>Mission</h3> <p>We forge alliances and collaborate with industry partners on research and practice in diversity and inclusion.</p>	 <h3>Vision</h3> <p>To be a recognised hub with a world-class reputation for research, advice and knowledge exchange on diversity and inclusion.</p>
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Three Broad Functions

<p>1</p>  <h3>Research</h3> <p>Build on DCU's academic expertise in diversity and inclusion research and practice</p> <p>Provide research, advice and knowledge exchange on diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>2</p>  <h3>Capability</h3> <p>Facilitate knowledge management and exchange on core issues, policy and practice in diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Provide access to the very latest in academic research, insights and tools on diversity and inclusion to build knowledge and understanding</p>	<p>3</p>  <h3>Community</h3> <p>Forge alliances and collaborate with industry partners</p> <p>Partner with specialist organisations, education and government</p> <p>Support organisations in all aspects of their diversity and inclusion journeys</p>
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Introduction to Indeed

Indeed's mission is to help people get jobs. As the #1 job site worldwide, Indeed strives to put jobseekers first, giving them free access to search for jobs, post CVs, and research companies¹. Every day, we connect millions of people to new opportunities.

We are committed to creating a workplace and global community where inclusion is not only valued, but prioritised. We recognise that diverse viewpoints bring diverse capabilities, strengthening our decision-making and fuelling our growth.

Our dedicated Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging team works across the business to ensure diversity and inclusion is embedded in all of our processes and procedures. The team provides coaching, guidance and support to all employees to cultivate an inclusive environment, working in partnership with our internal Inclusion Resource Groups (IRGs), external organisations, and training and development institutions.

As a founding partner of the DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion, Indeed is delighted to collaborate with Centre on research regarding self-identification in the workplace more broadly, to help companies become more inclusive. Our aim is that this research will support our own endeavours, as well as the endeavours of our clients and members of the Centre of Excellence, to better accommodate different needs within the workplace. This project represents the core of who we are as a company - an inclusive employer with a mission to help people of all backgrounds get jobs - and we are grateful to Sandra and the team for all their hard work in bringing this project to fruition.

Learn more about our diversity and inclusion efforts at www.indeed.com/inclusion



¹ comScore, Total Visits, March 2019



Biographies

Melrona Kirrane

Dr Kirrane is Associate Professor of Organisational Psychology at DCU Business School where she delivers onto a range of advanced management programmes. She is also Professor of Leadership at Princess Nouriah University, Riyadh and holds a visiting professor role at the Technical University of Vienna. She is a recipient of a distinguished Erskine Fellowship at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

Melrona's research interests include leadership, gender and the relationship between individual differences and performance at work. Her research has been published in top-tier scholarly journals. Melrona has worked with a number of organisations across the financial, legal and IT sectors on projects related to leadership development, change management and employee selection and assessment.

Seònaid Ó Murchadha

An honours graduate of Dublin City University and University of Alcalá in Madrid, Seònaid has many years' experience assisting employers and organisations in successfully steering their way towards the greater inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. She achieved certification with the International Disability Management Standards Council as a Certified Disability Management Professional and Certified CBDMA Auditor recognition from the Canadian National Institute of Disability Management & Research.

She has also worked as HR and Disability Project Manager for the Employer Disability Information pilot initiative advising employers on the recruitment, management and retention of people with disabilities. Most recently, Seònaid has been working with the DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion.

A special thanks to Ann Marie Dunne and James Rickard for contributing to this report.

Introduction

People with disabilities have always struggled to secure mainstream employment in comparison to their peers without disabilities. To address this, government and disability advocacy groups continue to work together to implement a range of wide-reaching policies to change the outcomes for applicants and employees with disabilities. The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for the Employment of People with Disabilities 2015 – 2024² brings together decades of consultation and research to ensure a coordinated approach to support people with disabilities into employment. The cross-government strategy is a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on all aspects of disability and employment. Working to six strategic priorities, including engaging employers, it sets out a joined-up approach to supports and services available for people with disabilities, who could and want to work with the appropriate reasonable accommodations.

The recent Supreme Court landmark ruling in the *Daly v. Nano Nagle*³ case has clarified the rights of people with disabilities to reasonable accommodations at work. It finally gives employers pointers on processes and consultation. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has recently stated that it will be using its statutory powers to prepare and bring forward a new legal code of practice to promote greater employment of people with disabilities⁴.

The National Disability Authority is continuing its hard work producing research and guides to help employers in this area, such as regularly monitoring the initiatives of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and the employment quotas for the Irish public sector under the Disability Act 2005⁵. Their recent pilot project, the Employer Disability Information service, established the need for employer support to change the landscape of disability and employment in our society.

How many people have a disability in Ireland?

643,131

According to the 2016 Census



That's 1 in 7 people, a slight increase since 2011

² <http://nda.ie/Publications/Employment/Employment-Publications/Comprehensive-Employment-Strategy-for-People-with-Disabilities.html>

³ <https://www.ihrec.ie/supreme-court-significantly-clarifies-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-to-reasonable-workplace-accommodation/>

⁴ <https://www.ihrec.ie/discrimination-against-people-with-disabilities-in-employment-a-persistent-and-pernicious-roadblock-to-workers-dignity-and-inclusion/>

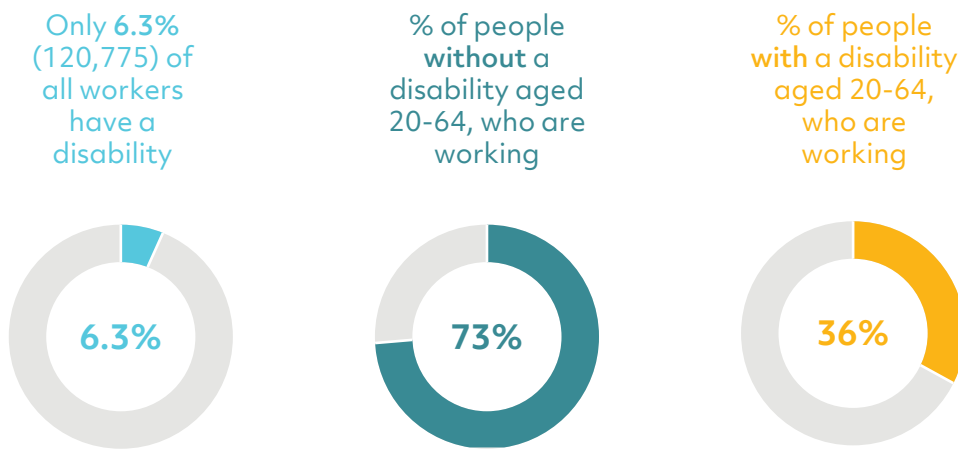
⁵ <http://nda.ie/Publications/Employment/Employment-of-people-with-disabilities-in-the-public-service/>

However, access to the workplace continues to be a challenge. Government support structures and schemes to incentivise the employment of people with disabilities remain unchanged since the last century – lots of work is being done to bring modern solutions to our 21st century workplaces in particular since the government’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2019. People with disabilities are now calling for a rights-based approach to support and greater decision making powers in their own lives.

Employers are also taking the initiative to share the learning. Forums such as the DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion support companies in driving the change and promoting inclusion by sharing the ‘how to’ of diversity and inclusion for people with disabilities.

This research study is the first of its kind in Ireland, featuring the voices of employers through their real-life examples and challenges. This game changing piece of analysis guides diversity and inclusion leaders on to the right path of best practice, highlighting how to get it right when encouraging self-identification and handling reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

Employment and Social Exclusion



All data taken from CSO data Census 2016



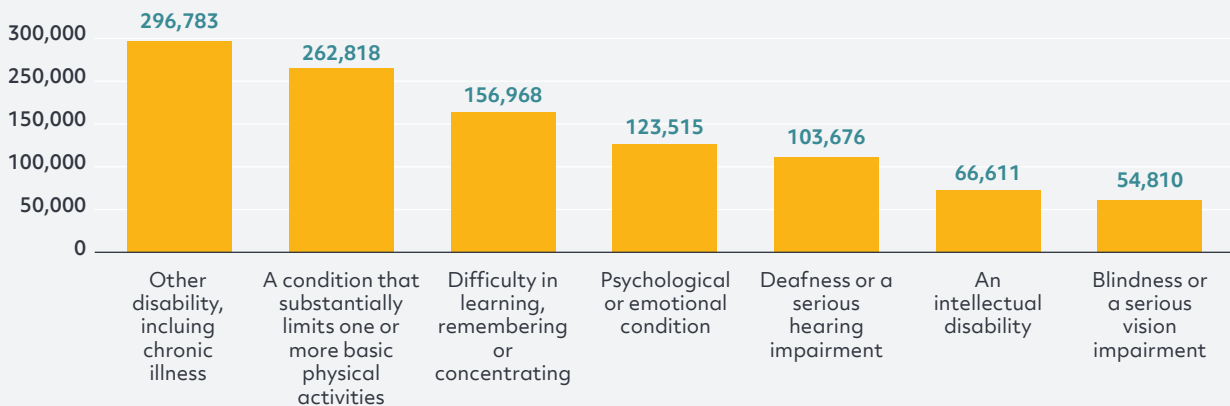
Research Report

One in seven people in Ireland have a disability⁶. Such individuals are twice as likely to be unemployed as their peers without a disability. Regardless of gender or geographical area, people with disabilities in Ireland are more likely to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion than people without disabilities.

The majority of disability across the world is acquired during working life between the ages of 18 and 65, and usually as a result of an accident or illness. This means that all employers are likely to have an employee with a disability in the workplace at some stage.

What are the most common types of disability?

The most common type of disability is 'other disability, including chronic illness'. This might include, for example, asthma, diabetes or heart disease. The next most common is 'a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities', like arthritis or a spinal injury. However, people can have more than one disability.



The most common disabilities are hidden or invisible to the casual observer. Further, many people can have more than one disability. Likewise, other aspects of a person's identity may impact how they experience their disability and the barriers that they face. For example, where people experience discrimination on the basis of their racial or ethnic background, or socioeconomic status, they may lack access to essential services that support them in accessing education and work. The concept of intersectionality - where different aspects of a person's identity (e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation) overlap to create a unique experience - is extremely important when analysing and understanding the needs of people with disabilities in the workplace and society more broadly.

⁶ CSO data, Census 2016

Disclosing these personal matters can be a complex and challenging process for many individuals, and it involves many factors. People with disabilities often fear that revealing their disability may result in them being judged, discriminated against or treated differently by management and their peers.

About the Research

This study was designed to explore the means by which employees could be encouraged to self-disclose personal information. The rationale behind the study was that if organisations are aware of personal requirements of employees, they are better placed to respond to them effectively. Two key questions were posed:

1. How can employees be encouraged to disclose personal information?
2. What positive outcomes emerge from employee self-disclosure?

Representatives of six organisations across a variety of sectors were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews about this topic. These organisations came from a variety of sectors (Information Technology, Recruitment, Finance, Pharmaceuticals and Higher Education) and together employ over 45,000 employees. The findings of the study are presented below.



Encouraging Self-Disclosure

The data revealed a number of issues that relate to encouraging disclosure of personal information by employees. These include matters related to the context of personal data collection, the purpose of personal data collection and the process of personal data collection. The data also revealed a number of tensions within these processes that need to be managed. Data related to each of these issues are presented below.

a) Context of personal data collection

Generally speaking, the purpose of gathering personal data was considered to be a means of developing action plans to address issues that are raised and to monitor progress towards related goals. In the first instance, respondents said that they were careful about the personal data they requested from employees. They also emphasised that employees were generally at liberty to decide what information they gave and what they withheld. One participant emphasised adherence to regulations with respect to personal data requests:

“ We are highly regulated and as such we are a very, very compliant organisation. We absolutely have to be one hundred percent. We have to be cognisant of who sees your information, what will happen to it, what’s done with it, what’s the purpose and rationale for gathering this information. It [personal data] is taken very seriously (Organisation 4).

Respondents expressed discomfort with requesting employees to disclose personal information without it being directly linked to specific legislation or workplace benefits. For example, one participant described how data requested from employees must be linked to a specific purpose:

“ Primarily we focus on data such as age and gender because that’s linked to benefits. Obviously, we need to know nationality because it can be linked to visas and where people can go. Also [we gather data on] visa dependents because it’s covered from a health insurance perspective and a life and benefits perspective (Organisation 4).

Similarly, another participant said it was important to create a compelling reason for why the organisation was asking employees to self-disclose personal information.

“ I think for sure it’s all about education and communication: ‘What’s the purpose, what’s the nature and why do we want this information’. If an organisation can create a compelling reason for why they need this information and what they’re going to do, then I think that’s basically an information invitation that all employees should have (Organisation 4).”

For international organisations, they must consider the legislation in each of the countries in which they are collecting employee data. One participant said:

“ In 2018, we rolled out our first self-identification campaign globally, not in all of our locations, but in some where we’re allowed to ask certain questions. We offer the opportunity to our employees to disclose certain demographic information about themselves, be that their gender, their gender identity, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity and indeed disability as well (Organisation 6).”





b) Purpose of data collection

Respondents reported that one of the main drivers of efforts to gather personal data was to benefit individual employees. For example, one participant said:

“ I think the more you can reach out to understand what’s important, the more you can relate it back to ‘you asked, you said, we did.’ I feel, in that instance, we have a better claim to ask for information (Organisation 4).

In a similar vein, participants noted that disclosing information would be an avenue for organisations to create inclusive cultures. For example, one participant said:

“ The more that we know, the better we can support our employees going forward. We can only do that when we have the information and data necessary to do that (Organisation 6).

Getting people to disclose their data was regarded as a responsibility of HR. One of the participants voiced this as:

“ We should as leaders be accountable to do something (for D&I culture) (Organisation 1).

However, they were keen to point out the role of employees in this regard. One of the participants spoke of:

“ Handing back the power to the employees. HR can define where they’re going to focus on based on the feedback that they’ve received (Organisation 4).

Other respondents noted that HR should not be the sole owners of this process, with:

“ We don’t believe that D&I is something that is owned by HR. We can be the custodians of it, but it’s something that’s owned by everybody, we all have a responsibility. (Organisation 4).



c) Process of self-disclosure

The process for employee self-disclosures in the workplace appears to be quite similar across organisations. Respondents described the process as follows: In the first instance, the employee speaks to their line manager privately. With the employee's permission, the line manager would then speak to others in the organisation who could help arrange accommodations. Describing the process following a disclosure from an employee, one respondent outlined the involvement and motivation of people across the organisation:

“ The process I went through then was via the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). I spoke to HR and we used Occupational Health (OH) onsite to give the employee the support they needed from all directions (Organisation 2).

Thus, it appears that the line manager's role and behaviour are two very important elements of this process. They are required to have knowledge of the organisation, its capabilities, people and resources. In order to be 'discreet' and help the employee, the line manager must know who to approach. As one of the participants said:

“ You can't fix everything on your own but you might know somebody who can. I knew [HR manager] who knew people in Employee Health and Safety and we used our connections with people that we had known for a decade or more (Organisation 2).

Close co-operation between organisational teams was noted as particularly helpful in responding effectively to employees' disclosed needs. One participant noted:

“ Our teams work closely together. For example, D&I, HR and Talent teams partner closely with the real estate team, working on things like accessibility of our buildings. Everyone knows who they can go to when an issue arises (Organisation 6).

Participants regarded a strong social network within the organisation and positive rapport between line managers and individual employees as important elements in ensuring employees feel comfortable with self-disclosure. Building a strong relationship was considered to be related to the manager's own motivations to be open and supportive for their team. For example, speaking of managing a disclosure from one of their team, a manager said the following:

“ I spoke to the individual. That would be natural for me. I would try and build a relationship with the staff, work with them, help them build trust and relationships. I'm not just saying that, it's what I do (Organisation 2).

Managers who reported positive experiences took time to get to know their team. In one example, a manager who was helping one of their team through recovery from addiction looked back at their work history and helped them slowly and carefully get back to the standard of work they were producing before their problems began to impact on them. Achieving this involved:

“ A lot of conversations and just honestly listening to them. That was what I think was beneficial for them (Organisation 2).

Speaking of other positive outcomes of that situation, the manager reported that the other team members went from thinking that their colleague was going to lose their job to gaining trust in their manager for supporting their colleague. There was an acknowledgement that perhaps managers need time and experience to grow into the type of manager who is openly supportive and inclusive.

“ I’ve grown - I suppose I’ve learned how to get the best out of people. Time is precious for us all but I would always make time for the people that are working for me directly or indirectly (Organisation 1).

On the other hand, some participants did speak of times when they themselves had unapproachable managers, leading them to continue to struggle with problems rather than disclosing them and seeking accommodations. For example:

“ There would be no way I would consider approaching that manager. I just managed or didn’t as the case may be. It all comes down to being able to have a good conversation (Organisation 1).

Participants alluded to line manager behaviour that may discourage employees from volunteering personal information. For example, if managers do not ‘check in’ with team members when they may be working under pressure due to time-lines and workload, employees may not feel the manager is willing to listen to them.

Employee resource groups (ERGs) were identified as a route whereby self-disclosure could be encouraged. ERGs and diversity and inclusion committees were considered to be effective for spreading ownership of diversity and inclusion principles throughout the organisation:

“ ERGs act as a forum where people can raise issues. For example, we’ve got a lot of feedback that doors are not accessible so that would be an issue they could raise or systemic issues as well (Organisation 5).

Another participant pointed to the advantages of ERGs, saying:

“ ERGs help us identify ‘what are the things we need to change?’ The D&I and HR team can’t be everywhere so we use these groups as ‘barometers’ (Organisation 4).



d) Issues arising

i. Employee privacy and discretion

Tension was revealed between the organisations' legal privacy obligations in respect of data collection and the need to respect the individual choice of employees to disclose or withhold certain personal information. Cultural differences in attitudes to disclosure were an additional complexity for organisations to manage in this regard. For example:

“ In some countries, we will actively send out communications to employees about our self-identification campaign and we tell them a lot as to why we do that. But in other locations, we tailor the messaging to the location we're working in and how comfortable employees are in giving their data. (Organisation 6).”

Participants noted that self-disclosure has to be on the individual employee's terms and preferred timing. For example:

“ The issue was that the person themselves felt ready to have that conversation (Organisation 4).”



ii. Hidden disability

The issue of hidden disability also arose in the data. Hidden disabilities are not visible or obvious to the onlooker but can have a significant impact on a person's life. Such conditions include epilepsy, mental ill-health, neurodiversity, diabetes, cancer, age-related hearing loss and acquired brain injuries. Respondents described employees living with such invisible disabilities as generally being private about their conditions, compensating at work for any negative impact of the disability. They described such employees as fearing stigma and possible discrimination and being thought of as less capable than their colleagues. Remembering a disclosure that was made to them some time ago, one of the participants described how an employee had:

“ A lot of anxiety about this becoming common knowledge [as] there might be some assumptions made on their capability (Organisation 2).

They also recounted occasions of employees wondering whether they fitted into the concept of 'disabled' or 'differently abled'. For example:

“ I was speaking to someone who is deaf and they were saying 'I'm not disabled, I'm just deaf' and then they suddenly realised.... I might be discriminated against because I'm deaf (Organisation 5).

Another participant wondered if 'disability has gotten lost in D&I' and whether people who have a disability align themselves with D&I themes.

“ Is that where people with disabilities see themselves, with gender, etc.? (Organisation 3).

In one case, noting that about three percent of employees identified as 'differently abled' in an employee survey, the organisation concerned decided to offer a list of categories relating to being differently abled in ensuing surveys. These included chronic illness, breathing problems (e.g. asthma), psychological disorders, autism, depression and neurodiversity. The data gathered in later surveys indicated a significantly higher level of 'differently abled' employed in the organisation. This led to the adoption of this approach in all future surveys. The participant commented:

“ When a lot of people think of disability they think of physical disabilities. We think a lot more people who maybe had a psychological disorder, or were 'neurodiverse' or had a chronic illness, suddenly realised they were in this category (Organisation 5).”

It was also noted that campaigns to raise awareness and reduce stigma of mental health issues supported the endeavour to raise awareness of hidden disabilities. Participants described awareness raising campaigns as:

“ Enablers – they make people feel more at ease talking about stuff like this (Organisation 2).”

A Case in Practice

One of the managers interviewed provided a valuable insight into the different perspectives on disclosure. They described a situation where they had just taken up the role of managing an existing team and one of the team disclosed that they had a significant hearing impairment. From the manager's and the organisation's perspectives, they felt guilty for not being able to help earlier, but in the situation described, the individual was not considering disclosure until a crisis point arrived and the condition, which they had managed to separate from their work throughout their lives to that point, had become a huge barrier to their process and interactions at work:

“ I wish I could have nailed this situation faster. It would have removed this problem from someone who was new and vulnerable. Even now though, this employee would say about that time, ‘you know I was very good at hiding, I spent eighteen years through school and college and postgrad.’ They were very adept at making sure it didn't impact but in that one moment, when they broke down, they went from 0-100 in 5 seconds. They had been compensating, compensating, compensating, and then finally they couldn't take it anymore. They were very close to walking out the door (Organisation 2).



Positive outcomes from self-disclosure by employees

Participants noted a number of positive outcomes from self-disclosure by employees. These included raising awareness of disability, extension of facilities to able-bodied employees, innovations in disclosure procedures and the identification of management training needs.

a) Awareness-raising

Self-disclosure by employees was noted as a means of raising awareness of the issues carried by people living and working with disability or impairment and the need to accommodate them. For example:

“ One of our employees in the U.S. started doing sign language for beginners in their office and these people are starting to understand what it’s like to have a hearing impairment and they work with sign language interpreters if they want to learn more (Organisation 6).

In a similar vein, it was noted that self-disclosure by one employee encouraged others to follow suit as appropriate.

“ The individual felt it was a positive thing and it opened the door for other people to have those conversations (Organisation 4).





b) Extension of facilities

Participants also reported that accommodations for certain impairments could be extended to be made use of by non-impaired employees. For example, quiet rooms made available for employees with autism, could also be used by employees feeling overloaded and in need of some quiet time in their work day.

“ Anyone can have a bad day so it’s been really helpful for people to find a quiet space (Organisation 5).”

The principle of universal design⁷ allows for offices to be designed in a way that is inclusive for everybody. Thus instead of employees feeling they may be ‘discriminated against’ for a disability, they feel included. One participant said:

“ People are a lot more comfortable to self-identify when there’s no fuss being made. They can self-identify and not feel like a burden. So they don’t need to fight for anything so they’re far more willing to say ‘Well actually I will use that, that’s brilliant, because actually I am neuro-diverse’ (Organisation 5).”

Interestingly, it was noted that where there are freely available and widely known-about family-friendly accommodations, employees seem to be more likely to disclose that they would like to avail of them.

⁷ <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design>

c) Procedural innovations

Participants made a number of suggestions for how disclosures could be further encouraged within organisations. One participant suggested greater anonymity or privacy may encourage employees to come forward with self-disclosures:

“ How about something anonymous. Like I don't want to talk to my manager about this but I do want to talk (Organisation 2).

Another participant wondered if they could offer a forum to help employees self-disclose. Their motivation for the suggestion was to save employees having to reach a 'crisis point' before they considered disclosing a personal issue:

“ We need to make 'the covert more overt' but that's very difficult (Organisation 2).

Participants suggested the use of documents to record self-disclosures as a means to simplify the process:

“ A 'passport' type document could be populated by the employee and their manager and used to communicate accommodations for the employee where necessary in the organisation. This could be the 'one point of truth' as regards employees' personal data (Organisation 4).





d) Identification of managerial training needs

Training in disability awareness, mental health and emotional intelligence was identified as a valuable outcome in relation to employee self-disclosure. This was not only in relation to improving managers' responses to self-disclosure but also in relation to managers accessing support services for themselves as situations of self-disclosure can be upsetting for all concerned. One of the managers described how:

“ I found it really hard to not give too much support [to an employee who disclosed a problem]. I probably overstepped the mark a couple of times to give them too much support and that's when HR would step in to help me. [HR] were always around to talk to. I did get the support, whatever I needed and once [employee] was getting the right support, I was quite happy with that (Organisation 2).

Research Conclusion

An organisational culture that values inclusion lives that value in a number of ways; with support and training for employees and managers. Also, by implementing universal design and accommodations that may have been requested by some people but are available to all who feel they need them. The research participants interviewed for this study reported positive outcomes for the individuals who choose to disclose; their team, their managers and consequently the organisation as a whole.

The complex and personal nature of disclosure for employees and line managers poses challenges for both sides. Organisations and line managers fear having sensitive and critical conversations around self-disclosure while employees are unsure of the rationale for requesting sensitive data and whether there will be any consequences for them for disclosing.

HR leads the way in this area, but must ensure that the culture of inclusiveness is shared across the organisation by all employees. Encouraging the creation and development of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) is one way to help spread the feeling of ownership for diversity and inclusion to all staff. Invisible disabilities are the most difficult to tease out and this research has shown that organisations who use inclusive language rather than medicalised terms achieve a more comprehensive result from their employee engagement surveys and requests for data.

Employees often reach a crisis point before they are ready to self-identify as differently abled. But by supporting all employees through their employment relationship and actively encouraging an open and inclusive culture where accommodations are easily accessed and widely available, disclosure happens naturally and is embraced.

The key to this interaction is the line manager and their behaviour. They can be supported by all stakeholders in the organisation to ensure that the process runs smoothly and systematically.

Accommodations provided are overall seen as a positive measure and by rolling out awareness raising campaigns on various diversity and inclusion topics, people find it easier to self-identify and 'come-out' as differently abled or having a disability.

The journey to implementation can be a challenge but there are numerous sources of information and support to assist. The disclosure process should be clear to all staff and they should be actively encouraged to engage with peers and management – all stakeholders have rights and responsibilities in creating an inclusive culture open to disclosure.



Toolkits

1: Tips for Successful Self-identification at Work

- Prepare the ground work for data collection to ensure that employees understand why the organisation is seeking diversity information. Sow the seeds of inclusion by reinforcing the commitment to being a more inclusive workplace and wish to cater for all employees' needs, especially if people need help to be themselves at work and perform as effectively as possible.
- Take all perspectives into account by asking all stakeholders to get involved. If you do not have experience of self-disclosure yourself, put yourself in the shoes of someone who wishes to self-disclose but is unsure of the consequences.
- Establish Employee Resource Groups to gather your diversity and inclusion champions and get assistance for the roll out of initiatives to create a more inclusive workplace environment.
- Ensure that there is 'one point of truth for disclosure' in an organisation such as an accommodations passport document, or a process for disclosure with clear ownership.
- Check in with employees frequently and always ask whether they require any support to avoid the disclosure happening at a crisis point for an employee; leave it open to disclose at any time in the employment relationship.
- Clarify the definition of what constitutes a disability so that people can self-identify more easily. Provide examples for guidance where possible.
- Use inclusive language to encourage self-disclosure and ensure that there is a transparent process for staff to follow.
- Support the line manager throughout the process and provide training on how to deal with requests.
- Write a self-disclosure process and stick to it. Let staff know about the process and how it operates. There are responsibilities on all sides when self-identification occurs – employee must provide information and the employer must provide appropriate measures to accommodation a disclosed disability – incorporate them into your disclosure policy.
- Try to encourage self-identification in your performance management process to avoid reaching crisis point when an employee with disabilities is compensating or covering their disability.

2: Accommodations Passport

Enabling critical conversations

It can be challenging for managers to have conversations with their employees about situations they are not familiar with, or where they have not had a personal experience. The aim of this passport is to provide guidance for managers on how to have a constructive engagement with employees regarding accommodation requirements.

Passports such as this, are used in many situations such as a recent medical diagnosis, a change in caring responsibilities, mental health challenges or recovery, cancer recovery, change in the impact of an existing disability or a newly acquired condition. This passport documents what adjustments have been agreed between the individual and their manager on how the organisation can support them at this time, and going forward. This should be reviewed regularly and a review schedule agreed in the first meeting. There are many templates available. Below are the guiding recommendations on what should be included in your organisation accommodations passport.

Top 6 Tips	
1	Keep it simple - one page, plain language
2	Document accommodations and agreements between employee and the organisation
3	Include guidance process for managers on critical conversations
4	Ensure key review dates are included
5	Ensure managers are fully informed on the organisations policies and supports for accommodating an employee with a disability
6	Provide guidance on the 'impact' of a disability and accommodation (not condition)

For accommodation passport examples, see the following links:

www.ictu.ie/press/2019/12/03/workplace-passport-scheme-announced-by-ictu-and-ib/

archive.acas.org.uk/adjustments

askjan.org/topics/Disability-Disclosure.cfm

askjan.org/topics/accommo.cfm

askjan.org/topics/interactive.cfm

3: Sample of questions for engagement surveys

Ensure disability is clearly defined at the beginning of the survey.

1. Do you consider yourself a person with a disability?

Answers: Yes No Don't know Prefer not to say

2. Do you consider yourself to have, or have you been diagnosed with, any of the following?

Answers: A chronic illness (e.g. Cancer, arthritis etc) Neurodiversity (e.g. Dyslexia, ADHD, Dyspraxia) Autism Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger's) Blindness or a serious visual impairment Deafness or a serious hearing impairment A condition that limits basic physical activities A psychological or emotional condition A difficulty learning, remembering or concentrating An intellectual disability Chronic pain Prefer not to say Other

[Free Text Box]

3. Are you aware of any reasonable accommodations your organisation offers?

Answers: Yes [free text box to list] No Don't know Prefer not to say

4. Have you availed of any reasonable accommodations within the last 12 months?

Answers: Yes No Don't know Prefer not to say

5. If no, do you know how to avail of a reasonable accommodation within your organisation?

Answers: Yes No Don't know Prefer not to say

Sample of GDPR statement:

You are invited to participate in this survey, which is anonymous and voluntary. You can withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences. Your participation requires the completion of a survey which will take approximately X minutes. Some basic demographic data will be gathered to facilitate data analysis but it will not lead to your being identifiable. The data collected will be stored in X place and will only be accessible to X people. All data will be anonymised in a safe and confidential manner to ensure the content is not disclosed. The data will be kept solely for the purpose of informing the Diversity and Inclusion strategy of the organisation and will be deleted on X date. No data regarding the identity of participants (e.g. Name, Contact details) is required within questionnaire. Your personal data (if any) will not be shared outside of the organisation. Every participant has the right to lodge a complaint with the Irish Data Protection Commission should the need arise.

4: Where to get candidates – DCU Ability Programme

The DCU Ability Programme aims to create meaningful and tailored pathways into education, training and employability for young people with disabilities, using a person-centred approach. The programme is co-financed by the Irish Government and the ESF Programme for Employability Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

They work in partnership with disability organisations to harness their joint expertise, resources and facilities to address barriers to employment; supporting young people with disabilities to become more employable by gaining skills and experience.

By working with companies who are in a position to offer a job placement and giving work experience to a young person with disabilities, the organisation learns how they can improve access to employment for all. Employers who sign up with the DCU Ability Programme have the advantage of engaging with work ready jobseekers with disabilities who have already completed a supported placement with a DCU partner business and have the knowledge of what supports they may need in the workplace.



Heather's work experience

Heather was one of the first young people to start on the 12 week course and she was the first young lady to join the group. Heather developed in confidence and experience over the twelve weeks and managed to secure a fantastic work experience in DCU in the Community.

Heather completed a four-week work experience placement at DCU in the Community - an adult and community education centre linked with Dublin City University. During her placement at DCU in the Community, Heather assisted in a variety of office administration and reception activities such as front-house duties, hospitality, and classroom set-up for a number of educational programmes at the centre.

The team in Ballymun were amazed at how professional and skilled Heather was as she carried out the duties to a very high standard and in a timely manner. The DCU Ability team were so impressed with such a glowing reference from the first of the group to finish their work experience.



Specialist Organisations / Access to Candidates

There are a number of specialist organisations that facilitate placements, work experience and training for people with disabilities looking for work. They also engage with employers to support them throughout the process. Many organisations also support employers to apply for grant assistance for the employment of people with disabilities.

- EmployAbility service is a nationwide recruitment and advice service for people with disabilities and provides employers with access to a pool of potential employees and ongoing support. They offer a job-matching service and advice on all stages of the process. For more information, go to www.gov.ie/en/service/8578c4-access-the-employability-service/ and for a full list of contact details go to www.gov.ie/en/publication/28d5a6-list-of-employability-organisations/
- The Ability programme provides positive pathways to education and employment for young people with disabilities to bring them closer to the labour market. The various projects are co-financed by the Irish government and the European Social Fund and a full list of contact details are available at this link - www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr010618.aspx
- Specialisterne Ireland is a specialist consultancy that supports people with autism and Asperger's to access employment. They also support employers to recruit and retain talented diverse people with autism. For further information, go to www.specialisterne.ie
- The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability runs a mentoring and placement programme for graduates with disabilities called the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) programme. It promotes access to the mainstream labour market for people with disabilities while also building the capacity of employers to be inclusive. For further information, go to ahead.ie/wamemployers

Government Schemes and Grants

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection provides a range of financial grants and supports for the private sector to assist people with disabilities to access and progress in employment.

The reasonable accommodation fund for the employment of disabled people offers supports to help an employer take appropriate measures to accommodate a person with a disability. These include the employee retention grant scheme, workplace equipment adaptation grant, personal reader grant and the job interview interpreter grant.

The wage subsidy scheme provides financial incentives to organisations to employ people with disabilities who work more than 20 hours per week. And the disability awareness support scheme assists organisations to integrate employees with a disability into their workplace.

A full list of all grants available and further information is available from your local Intreo office or at the following link - www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Supports-for-People-with-Disabilities-and-for-Employers---SW.aspx







For further information:

E: coe.diversityinclusion@dcu.ie

W: www.dcu.ie/hr/coe_diversity_inclusion.shtml