



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility:

Building a diverse team

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Dolphin develops assistive technology for people who are blind, partially sighted or dyslexic. Our own workforce is diverse and we welcome and support people with disabilities. We know how easy it can be to integrate accessibility practices, so we'd like to share these processes and information with you, to help you make your organisation accessible and inclusive. We have also taken advice from a range of individuals and organisations, and value their input and expertise.





Your company culture and all communication should reflect your commitment to inclusion.

We recommend familiarising yourself with the Social Model of Disability. This was developed by disabled people, for disabled people and is an important and helpful way of considering and addressing inequality.

The Social Model of Disability considers that people are disabled by the society around them, not by any physical or mental attribute of their own. This means that with the right accessibility tools built in, and inclusivity considered, individuals have the ability to do everything in line with their colleagues. Removing barriers is what makes something accessible so everyone in the team has the opportunity to achieve their career goals.

Understanding barriers is important. Barriers are conditions or obstacles that get in the way of individuals using or accessing knowledge, resources and physical spaces.

Barriers can come in many forms:

- Physical
- Communication
- Technology
- Navigation and architecture
- Culture and attitudes
- Organisational processes
- Organisational structure

To improve your DEI, you should actively consider how something might be a barrier, and work to remove or reduce it.

A key part of making something accessible is to reduce or remove the barriers that stop people from independently engaging and participating in an activity. Get into the habit of doing this at the start of a product or process, rather than as a reaction. Make it a part of your company culture.

Examples of accessibility

A high step into a premises is an architectural barrier that may disable a wheelchair user if they can't get into the office independently, whereas a ramped access provides access to the building for everyone.

Reading a Word document on a laptop might be a technological barrier to a blind person. If they can access screen magnification or screen reading software on the company network, the barrier is removed and they can independently read and work on their laptop.

An attitudinal barrier might be that a person with ADHD is considered unable to concentrate. An understanding that with the right environment, or on the right project, the same person can focus on tasks for long periods and achieve their goals efficiently.

Embed social model values in your company culture and your work environment. Communicate to a wide range of people, including people who are blind, partially sighted or neurodivergent and actively identify and remove barriers to foster an inclusive culture.

It's important to enable disabled individuals to participate in decisions that impact them. You can do this by ensuring input is welcomed from everyone. Ensure adjustments are made for an equitable workplace experience for all.

Review your company website for accessibility and make appropriate changes to ensure it complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). This isn't complicated, simple modifications such as adding Alt Text to images, using a heading structure or simplifying a sentence can make a big difference to accessibility. Follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or download the Dolphin Website Accessibility Guide for more information.



Careers Page

We recommend reviewing the careers page on your website. Make it clear that your company is an equal opportunities employer and values diversity.

On your Careers Page, inform candidates about your inclusive and accessible recruitment process. Things to highlight might include:

- Accepting applications in any format
- Communicating you can adapt recruitment processes
- Offer to supply all documentation in different formats. These may include braille, large print or MP3. An inexpensive conversion tool such as [Dolphin EasyConverter Express](#) can help with this
- Ensure it's easy for candidates to find your contact details, so they can discuss the recruitment process and their needs with you if they want to

As part of this, you should define and share an Equal Opportunities Statement. Here is an example, taken from the Dolphin website:

Equal Opportunities Statement

“

We are committed to building a diverse team and encourage applications from people with disabilities.

We value diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive, accessible and respectful environment for all employees, partners and customers.

Furthermore, all applicants will be considered for employment without attention to race, colour, nationality, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, marital status or parental status.

All applicants will be considered based on competence, job requirements and business needs.

Dolphin is proud to be an equal opportunity employer and prohibits discrimination or harassment of any kind.

”

Other ways to communicate your commitment to inclusion

Get involved in national, local and sector-specific initiatives and training programs which support inclusivity in the workplace.

Dolphin has aligned with Disability Confident and Mindful Employer organisations on a national level, Inclusive Worcestershire locally and is also a signatory of the Tech Talent Charter, to demonstrate our commitment to drive equality in the UK tech sector.

Reference these on your website and job posts to help encourage applications from people with disabilities.



Write job ads and posts that clearly communicate your commitment to inclusive hiring and the support of neurodivergent candidates and candidates with disabilities.

Job adverts should provide an insight into your company culture, link through to your careers page or your Equal Opportunities Statement.

You can outline your recruitment process on your careers page. This helps inform candidates how you aim to provide an inclusive and accessible experience for all applicants. Offer to adapt your recruitment process and provide documentation in alternative formats, if needed. You could also offer your contact details so candidates can ask questions or share their needs.

When writing job adverts, it's important to make them easy to understand and that you list the essential requirements for your role.

Tips for accessible Job Ads

- Make them concise, preferably under 700 words
- Use plain English. Avoid buzzwords and jargon
- Use gender-neutral language
- Use short paragraphs and appropriate headings to help readers scan text
- Check readability with a tool such as Hemingway App or Grammarly

It's also worth ensuring you are only listing the essential requirements for your role. A long, extensive wish list of requirements can put candidates off. Many people won't apply unless they meet 100% of the requirements listed.

By all means, have a wish list to help assess candidates, but your job postings will encourage more diverse applications if you only include a short list of the essential criteria for applying.

To ensure your online job posts and careers webpages are fully accessible, you should use accessibility checkers or audit your company website to confirm it meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

To find out more, please refer to our [‘Website Accessibility Guide’](#).

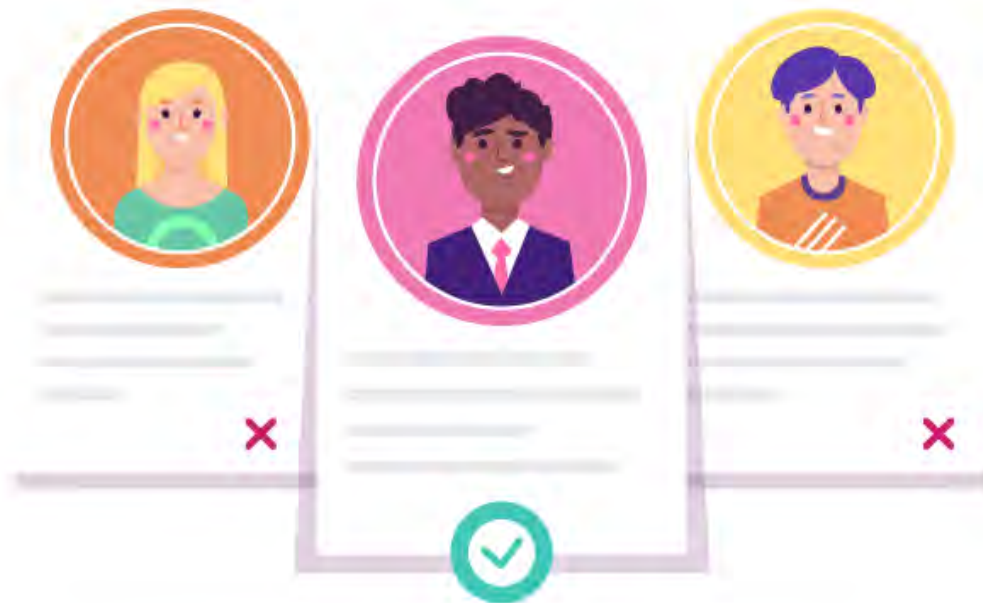


Key Takeaways

- Include diversity and inclusion messaging in your company brand pages
- Explore relationships with organisations that specialise in recruitment for people with disabilities and neurodiversity
- Keep your job requirements list short, focus on core skills
- Make sure digital iterations of your job posts meet WCAG guidelines

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The Recruitment Phase



Recruiting tips to help you reach underrepresented talent pools

Advertise vacancies internally, as well as on your company website, social media channels, job centres, agencies and online recruitment sites.

To reach more people, try not to rely on the same sources each time. Use different agencies and job sites. Ensure any recruiters you use are aware of your commitment to a fully accessible and welcoming workplace for employees who are disabled or neurodiverse.

Actively encourage your colleagues to share ads and recommend roles to a range of people from their own networks and connections. This helps empower your workforce to become ambassadors of your company, and they understand your commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Develop links with local schools, training providers and colleges. Offering work experience placements and supported internships is a great way to find new and diverse talent.

Key Takeaways

- Change where you post job listings to cast a wider net
- Ask your team to share job listings on their own social media accounts
- Connect with educational institutions to arrange work placements

Screening Applications CVs / resumes

Once you are happy that the essential requirements for the role are defined and agreed, it's much easier to screen applications without bias.

Many companies recognise the need to address unconscious bias during the recruitment process.

You can implement strategies such as 'anonymous' resume reviews or AI screening to ensure equality during the screening phase. Try to use more than one person to screen and shortlist the applications. This helps provide different perspectives and encourages more objective assessments.

These help you reduce the number of CVs/resumes to review manually. Only score the applications where candidates have met the minimum requirements.

Don't be tempted to try and level the playing field by using printed Word or PDF application forms. These forms are not always accessible to people with visual impairments, and can make it very difficult to complete and apply for roles.

Shortlisting Applicants Using Score Cards

When your job ads attract a large and diverse number of applicants, you need a method to select a smaller group to invite to interview.

Candidate scorecards are a helpful way to standardise the assessment of applicants. There are automated screening tools from job sites and LinkedIn, or you may use AI or prefer a more manual process.

Again, a scorecard approach helps remove bias. As each applicant is awarded scores based on specific competencies such as their experience, qualifications and knowledge.

This scoring process can continue through to the interview stage, where scores may be based on their responses to interview questions or tasks such as a presentation.

Reasonable Adjustments

We recommend that all correspondence with candidates welcomes applicants to share if they have a health condition or disability. If any applicants do share information with you which may require reasonable adjustments to your interview process, find out how you can make this happen, don't assume. It's important to be flexible when interviewing and assessing people, so all applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job.

Train all your staff, particularly those involved in the recruitment process so they know how to offer and make reasonable adjustments.

It's important to move quickly when recruiting to ensure top candidates don't accept another position.

Provide interview questions ahead of time

Sharing interview questions in advance gives candidates a chance to reflect. It helps provide meaningful answers that draw on experiences and skills. It can help to alleviate nerves, so you get a better idea of individual personalities.

For some neurodivergent candidates, this approach has further benefits. It provides space to plan, process and retain information, without distraction or complex verbal information.

Conduct inclusive interviews

With your shortlisted candidates, start the interview process with a pre-scheduled telephone or video call. This introductory interview is less time-consuming for both the hiring manager and the candidate, and it's the most inclusive interview option.

A call allows any candidates with neurodivergence or disability to first speak with you from an environment where they are comfortable, using a technology they are familiar with. So you get a better understanding of who they are as they talk about their expertise and abilities.

When you invite candidates for this interview call, make it clear that you are open to any video conferencing technology they prefer, and are also happy to conduct the interview by phone. It's also helpful not to insist that the camera is turned on. Instead, you should prioritise the interviewee's comfort, so they can communicate and feel at ease. It's also helpful to provide guidance on how they can ensure their technology setup is suitable before a video interview takes place.



Encourage candidates to share requests for accommodations

In all correspondence throughout the recruitment process, invite candidates to share their needs. The more you communicate that your organisation supports a diverse workforce, the more comfortable candidates will be. If adjustments are requested at any stage, make it clear that you are flexible and support candidates in any way you can.

An opening “How can I make the experience the best it can be for you?” or more formal “We are an inclusive employer. If you have a health condition or disability that may require adjustments to our interview process, please let us know and we will support this.”

It’s simple really: to support each candidate effectively, just ask them what they need! Provide reasonable adjustments and accommodations where you can and you’ll build a diverse workforce that benefits your organisation.

If you would like a starter for this, you can use the [Be My Best Self](#) tool. Developed by Dolphin to help individuals consider and communicate their accessibility needs. It’s a useful way to start the conversation around accessibility and identify any reasonable adjustments that could help your workforce get things done.

Timed competence tasks

If you run short tests or tasks during the interview process, try to create an environment where all candidates can demonstrate their expertise and abilities. A simple way to do this is to consider the timeframes for any tasks you set. Demonstrate your flexibility on time limits during interview tasks (talk through preferences beforehand) and reach a mutually agreed timeline for task completion. It helps alleviate barriers to concentration, to get the task done.

Creating an inclusive work environment not only ensures compliance with legislation, it enhances the overall perception of your company among both customers and employees.

In terms of cost, hiring and recruiting individuals with disabilities, neurodivergence or long-term health conditions does not usually require any complex adaptations or additional cost. For those where spend is required, funding options such as Access to Work in the UK are available. There are also financial incentives in some countries, such as the USA. These help companies and individuals purchase equipment and other reasonable adjustments such as assistive technology, ergonomic modifications or support personnel. Remember that removing barriers enables people to do their jobs well.

A diverse workforce which includes employees with disabilities brings with it a wide range of skills, such as creativity, innovation, and problem-solving perspectives. These give your company a competitive edge that many successful corporations, like Microsoft, acknowledge. They confirm the positive impact of hiring individuals with disabilities on their bottom line, along with improvements to overall performance and has success.



Key Takeaways

- Work with at least one other colleague to screen applicants
- Consider using candidate scorecards for equal and fair evaluation
- Vary your assessment techniques to the requirements of the position
- Interview correspondence should always include language that encourages candidates to ask for reasonable adjustments and accommodations
- Prepare to move quickly through the hiring process to retain the most talented candidates
- Develop your own method for shortlisting candidates
- Leverage the automated tools of Job sites to eliminate unqualified candidates
- Use a standardised scorecard for evaluating a candidate's qualifications
- Train all hiring teams to use the scorecard
- Make it safe for candidates to advocate for themselves in terms of adjustments
- Start the interview process with a phone or video call
- Give candidates the opportunity to work at their own pace when doing skill assessment projects



Fostering an inclusive workplace is not just a moral imperative, it also gives businesses a strategic advantage. Employers, managers and teams play a crucial role in ensuring that employees with disabilities have equal opportunities and a supportive work environment.

Here are some ways you can create an accessible and inclusive workplace to benefit everyone and enhance productivity for all your team members.

Companies should strive to be paperless. As well as being better for the environment and a way to cut unnecessary costs, providing digital alternatives to printed documents makes them accessible to people with visual impairments and other print disabilities. If print is unavoidable, ensure employees have access to tools to scan and convert it into digital formats. Essentially, each employee with a visual impairment should have equal access to the same information and opportunities as their sighted colleagues.

We recommend [EasyConverter Express](#) - a simple conversion tool that sits in your Microsoft Word toolbar and converts Word documents into a range of accessible formats in a few clicks! It also helps if you want to offer your customers the options for letters in large print, audio or braille files.





Ways to make your documents accessible:

- Use screen-readable file formats such as .RTF, .DOCX and Accessible PDF
- Provide Alt Text to images and diagrams in your documents
- Format your documents and make them easier to navigate with style tools. Create a clear heading hierarchy, use bullet points and clear formatting
- Write in plain English and check your documents over
- Consider providing documents in Braille or audio formats if necessary
- Avoid using forms

- Design and develop your organisation's intranet or server content with accessibility in mind
- Responsive design makes web content adaptable to different devices and screen readers
- Ensure that all multimedia content such as videos includes captions and transcripts
- Implement robust search functionality to help employees find information easily



Creating inclusive meetings and presentations is essential for the professional growth and participation of employees with disabilities, including visual impairments and neurodiversity.



How to make meeting agendas and presentations accessible:

- Distribute accessible formats of meeting agendas, materials and handouts in advance. This gives employees time to prepare and use assistive technology if needed.
- Make sure PowerPoint presentations are accessible: Provide your slides as an accessible PDF or Word document in advance. You can also share the whiteboard content live with some screen magnifier and screen reader users.

Accessible meeting etiquette:

- Encourage a culture of inclusivity by promoting respectful meeting etiquette
- Encourage speakers to identify themselves
- If meetings are online, do not insist remote attendees have their videos on
- Verbalise any non-verbal communication like saying yes instead of nodding your head only
- Use virtual meeting platforms with accessibility built-in features - MS Teams
- Enable closed captioning and screen-sharing options



Creating an inclusive workplace requires ongoing training and awareness initiatives for all your team members

Provide Disability Awareness Training

- Provide disability awareness training for all employees to foster understanding, appropriate language and behaviour.
- Promote the Social Model of Disability. Encourage an inclusive culture which reduces unconscious bias and assumes a can-do attitude.
- Provide the right accommodations or adjustments that enable people to do their job well - and remember that these adjustments aren't a one size fits all - trial and error can help you find out what works best for individuals.
- Offer specialised training to supervisors and managers about how to cultivate inclusion and better support employees with disabilities.

Accessibility Champions

- Encourage a forum or regular meetings to discuss accessibility challenges and solutions. Act on the recommendations promptly.
- Designate accessibility champions within your organisation who can serve as advocates and resources for employees with disabilities.
- Ensure all new employees are aware of who they can talk to.



Flexible Work Arrangements are key to accommodating the diverse needs of employees

- Offer flexible work hours that allow employees to choose schedules that suit their needs
- Consider remote work options when appropriate
- Understand the needs of some employees to attend additional medical appointments
- Don't offer rewards or benefits for attendance. Reward a job well done!

Telecommuting:

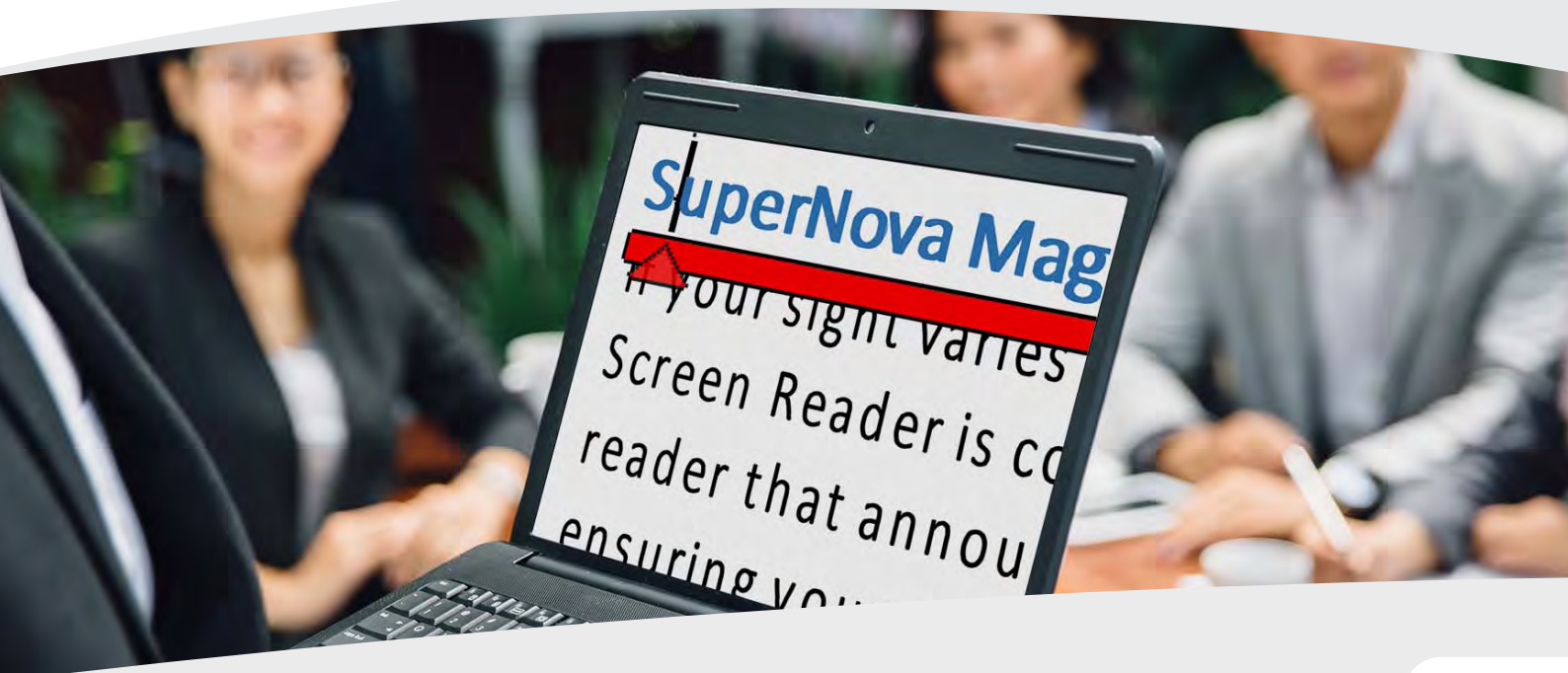
- Provide the necessary technology and resources for telecommuting and hybrid working
- Ensure that remote work platforms and tools are accessible
- Ensure that remote and hybrid working professionals have full access to all necessary files on shared and secure networks

Many individuals with print impairments - including visual impairment - use assistive technology to navigate, access and read information. Employers should be aware of these tools and provide access and support when needed.

As sight loss is a spectrum, different types of assistive technology may be used to access on screen information.

Magnification, Screen Readers and Text-to-Speech Tools

- Screen magnifiers enlarge content on the screen more than in-built accessibility features. Speech settings read out text only information from the screen, whereas a screen reader is often used by people who are blind to read, navigate and access all on screen information.
- Ensure your company software and systems are compatible with popular assistive technology tools like [SuperNova Enterprise](#).
- Support employees with visual impairments by providing screen magnification software that allows for colour scheme adjustment, and highlighting.
- Provide employees with large or multiple monitors to maximize screen space and enhance the ability to magnify content.
- Empower employees who are blind by providing screen reading software.
- Provide training to IT staff, so they can troubleshoot technical and training issues.





Braille

- Consider offering digital braille displays to staff who read braille. Braille displays are portable devices that enable braille readers to type and read digital information. They can be used in many roles. Users can simultaneously listen to calls or other audible information while typing or reading.
- Create braille labels for key areas such as elevator buttons and signs.
- Create braille versions of company documents, or encourage staff to share electronic braille files.

In addition to supporting colleagues and new starters with known disabilities, making assistive tech available to all your staff helps future-proof your business. It's increasingly important to have good, scalable assistive tech in place, so you can keep experienced staff if their circumstances change and as the age of retirement increases.

Always consider physical accessibility in your workplace. This can be part of general health and safety requirements, but additional adjustments are also helpful for current and future employees.



Navigation

- Ensure clear pathways in the office space
- Ensure adequate lighting in all areas
- Install tactile markers or braille signs for key areas

Ergonomics

- Offer ergonomic office furniture to accommodate different needs and ensure comfort. This may include standing desks
- Ensure offices have adequate lighting and adjustable monitor settings
- Encourage communication and feedback, to ensure you're doing your best for each employee. Each person's experience of disability is unique
- Establishing open communication channels and seek feedback from employees with disabilities and neurodivergence.



Sensory

- Ensure adequate lighting, with adjustable settings where required
- Encourage a dress code which ensures everyone can be comfortable
- Consider the sounds in your work environment. Workplace acoustics can be distracting, or make it difficult to hear what's being said. Reducing noise can increase comfort and concentration
- Allow staff to listen to music through headphones or earbuds while they work
- Encourage breaks away from desks and discourage eating in the office to keep food smells to a minimum
- Offer walking meetings to encourage communication without the need for eye contact, or stand-up meetings to keep things brief
- Provide access to natural light and fresh air for all employees where possible

Two-way communication with all your staff, regardless of ability, is key to creating an inclusive culture. Listen more and use feedback and ideas to create a culture everyone is proud to be part of.

Regular Check-Ins

- Conduct regular one-on-one check-ins with all employees to discuss their needs and experiences
- Encourage an open-door policy to address concerns or suggestions
- Consider all abilities during team-building exercises and activities
- Provide a confidential way for employees to offer feedback or report accessibility issues

Creating an inclusive workplace is not just about compliance; it's about creating a supportive and diverse environment that benefits all employees.

When you implement accessible information practices - provide assistive technology, foster inclusive meetings and presentations, provide ongoing training and awareness, offer flexible work arrangements, ensure physical accessibility and maintain open communication channels - you build a workplace where every employee can thrive.

Inclusivity is a win-win. It benefits employees with disabilities and also contributes to a more innovative, productive, and dynamic workforce.

Embrace inclusivity and encourage consideration for a more diverse way of thinking. Your organisation will reap the rewards of an inclusive environment. One that breaks barriers and ensures everyone experiences the true value of a diverse team.



Implementing [SuperNova Enterprise](#) transforms your workplace into an inclusive environment that caters to the needs of employees with print disabilities.

Dolphin Kiosks

If your organisation uses self-service kiosks for customers or staff, [Dolphin Kiosks](#) enable you to improve the user experience for customers with disabilities. It's a win for your brand and your customers. Discover more about these innovative solutions at yourdolphin.com and get in touch to see how Dolphin can help you.

