

Health and Safety for our valued disabled people in Guernsey workplaces

The effective and proactive management of health and safety for disabled employees is not only a legal requirement but also a moral and business need. On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, **Andrew Mills**, Gosha chairman, explains how Guernsey employers can best provide for their employees with disabilities



DISABLED people form a big proportion of our island population. The States estimates that about one in five of us are disabled in some way. A lot of disabilities are hidden and many organisations are not aware of a number of people who are disabled. They form a huge island workplace resource and a large customer base.

Disabilities are many and varied, some impact our mobility, some are completely unseen, some hinder our mental ability to do things. Some, sometimes unseen, examples include dyslexia, stress and autism.

Many disabled people can be excellent workers and they add lots of value to the organisation they work for.

But still there is stigma attached to people who are disabled by many in our business community. That must change.

The effective and proactive management of health and safety for disabled employees is not only a legal requirement but also a moral and business need. Making suitable provision is a great investment in an enterprise and, I think, the future success of many organisations here in Guernsey is dependent on how they treat disabled employees and customers.

In Guernsey, amongst a number of specific workplace laws, employers must adhere to the Health and Safety at Work (Guernsey) Ordinance, 1979 and the Prevention of Discrimination (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2022 which prohibits discrimination against disabled individuals (and others, of course).

We were one of the few places in the world without disability discrimination legislation until it was introduced and we are way behind the UK, both in terms of the delay in implementing such a law and in now changing workplace culture and attitudes towards disabled employees and customers.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY AND WORKPLACE RISKS

Disabled employees may face unique hazards in the workplace. For instance:

- **Physical hurdles:** Employees with mo-

bility or dexterity impairments may face challenges with, for example, manual handling, evacuation procedures or in accessing washrooms and other work areas.

- **Sensory disabilities:** Employees with visual or hearing impairments may require alternative communication methods or other workplace adjustments.

- **Mental health challenges:** Employees with mental health conditions may need adjustments to workload, work environment or communication styles. Mental health first aiders are now, thankfully, appointed by many organisations in Guernsey – see www.guernseymind.org.gg/training

GUERNSEY REQUIREMENTS

In Guernsey, employers are required to:

- **Conduct regular risk assessments:** Identify hazards and risks for all employees, including disabled individuals.

- **Make reasonable adjustments:** Modify the workplace or work practices to ensure all (including disabled employees) can work safely.

- **Provide training and personal protective equipment (if needed):** Ensure all employees, including disabled individuals, receive health and safety and other training and protective equipment, tailored to their needs or circumstances.

- **Implement inclusive policies:** Develop policies and procedures that promote equality and inclusion for all, including disabled employees and customers.

GOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

- **Risk assessment:** as part of your regular operational reviews (risk assessments), identify hazards which could affect disabled employees and customers.

Consult with employees, occupational health professionals and, as appropriate, disability charities and other disability organisations and specialist training providers (such as St John) to ensure that risk assessments are tailored to the circumstances in which you operate.

- **Reasonable adjustments:** make adjustments to the workplace, as appropriate for example:

- Provide wheelchair accessible walk/doorways, entrances/exits and other facilities and tailor workstations, as appropriate.

- Offer flexible work arrangements or adjusted workloads, as appropriate.

- Provide technology or other equipment to help get the job done well and safely.

- **Suitably inclusive policies:** adjust your workplace policies that promote equality and inclusion, to include:

- Disability and equality training for all employees.

- A clear procedure for reporting and addressing discrimination.

- Regular monitoring and review of any workplace adjustments which have been made.

- **Emergency procedures:** develop evacuation procedures that make provision for disabled employees, such as:

- Designating safe evacuation routes and assembly points and installing equipment which may be needed as an alternative to using a lift.

- Providing personal evacuation plans for employees with disabilities and make provision for disabled visitors – remember those who are deaf will not hear alarms.

- Conducting regular evacuation drills.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

- **Improved employee wellbeing:** if all employees feel valued and supported, it will enhance performance, motivation and loyalty throughout your organisation.

- **Increased productivity:** sensible adjustments enable employees to work more effectively.

- **Enhanced reputation:** demonstrating good commitment to inclusion and diversity enhances how people regard an organisation – its reputation will be better and a good reputation is an important factor in achieving business success.

- Better compliance with legislation – with

so many consequent benefits.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE IN GUERNSEY

- **Guernsey Disability and Inclusion Strategy:** Provides guidance on promoting disability inclusion in the workplace – see www.gov.gg/equalitypolicy

- **Guernsey Employers' Guide to Disability Equality:** Offers practical advice on making reasonable adjustments – see www.get.org.gg/uploads/media/GET-employment-and-disability-good-practice-guide.pdf

- **Disability organisations:** Consult with local disability organisations, such as Guernsey Mind, for support and guidance.

- **Guernsey Employment Trust:** Provides a free to use professional employment service for disabled job seekers and supportive employers – see www.get.org.gg for lots of helpful information.

- **Guernsey's Health Improvement Commission:** Does a great job in improving the well-being of us all – see www.healthimprovement.gg

- **Guernsey Disability Alliance:** Promotes the well-being of disabled islanders – see www.disabilityalliance.gg

- **Guernsey Health Connections:** Help and support for all islanders – see www.healthconnections.gg

Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of disabled people in Guernsey's workplaces requires a proactive, knowledgeable and inclusive approach.

By understanding the needs of disabled employees and customers, conducting effective risk assessments, making reasonable adjustments (often at little or no cost) and providing effective training and support, employers can create a positive and more productive work environment.

By doing so, organisations can reap the benefits of a diverse, inclusive, healthy and safe workforce and provide all customers with an environment which is not only safe and healthy but happy and welcoming too.

◆ www.gosha.org.gg