

Guidelines for the use of psychometric assessment with disabled people

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Introduction

Disabled people have a big contribution to make to British industry and commerce, but they are under-represented in the workplace; they are 30% less likely to be unemployed than other people of working age¹. Psychometric tests and questionnaires are one of the most objective and fair methods of selection, but they are often seen as a barrier to the employment of disabled people. This should not be the case. These guidelines outline some of the issues involved in testing disabled people and present practical suggestions for some of the problems that may arise. The aim is to use tests in an inclusive way, so as to help employers to recruit the best person for the job, irrespective of whether he or she has a disability.

These guidelines cover three main areas:

- The legal background. The Equality Act 2010, what it is, who it applies to, how it relates to the use of tests, and some key terminology
- Testing people with disabilities. General points in the use of tests with disabled people and practical issues in testing people with particular disabilities
- Interpreting test results. Issues to consider when scoring and interpreting the test results of disabled people

The guidelines are followed by an Appendix listing useful contact details.

Our summary of the legal background is merely intended to provide a summary and some context. It is not intended to provide legal advice for specific cases and if you have specific issues, you should take legal advice as required.

When we refer to an 'employer' we are also referring to a 'potential employer'.

Legal background: The Equality Act 2010

What is the Equality Act 2010, and who does it apply to?

The use of OPP psychometric tests and other published instruments should be informed in the United Kingdom by the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (the "Act"). Copies of the Equality Act 2010 can be found at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

The generally accepted ethical standards of the psychometric publishing industry require that psychometric tests should not discriminate unfairly against people with disabilities. The Equality Act 2010 covers the current legal requirements to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against. The Act applies to all service providers in Great Britain, and to situations involving an individual who has a physical or mental impairment. The Act defines disability as any substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individual's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. "Long-term" means that it has lasted at least 12 months, or is likely to last more than 12 months. Such impairments include, but are not limited to, those related to:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical co-ordination
- Continence
- Ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-facts-and-figures/disability-facts-and-figures#employment>

- Speech, hearing or eyesight
- Memory
- Ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Perception of the risk of physical danger
- Mental illness or mental health issues (insofar as they have a substantial, adverse and long-term effect on the individual's ability to carry out normal day to day activities). Many different types of mental health conditions can lead to a disability, including but not limited to:
 - Dementia
 - Depression
 - Bipolar disorder
 - Obsessive compulsive disorder
 - Schizophrenia
 - Self-harm.

Also protected under the Act are people with past, recurring or progressive disorders, severe disfigurements and controlled/corrected impairments. Protection is also extended to (from the moment they are diagnosed) people who have HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis.

Any treatment or correction, including medication, should not be taken into account in assessing disability. For example, a person with a hearing impairment is still said to be a disabled person even if they have the use of a hearing aid which enables them to hear adequately. The only exceptions to this rule are glasses and contact lenses. A short-sighted or long-sighted person is not deemed to be disabled even if they need corrective lenses in order to see adequately.

The Equality Act 2010 extends all previous legislation by adding that a disabled individual no longer has to demonstrate that their impairment influences a particular 'capacity', such as hearing, eyesight, speech or their mobility to qualify for protection against discrimination.

How the Act works in practice

The Act makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person when recruiting or employing staff; the best applicant can and should be appointed to a job irrespective of whether or not they are disabled. This means that employers should take steps to ensure that they do treat disabled people fairly. In order to understand how this works, it is important that the employer understands the concepts of *reasonable adjustment*, *justification*, and *employer knowledge*.

Reasonable adjustment

The Act requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate any particular needs a disabled person might have. This means that employers should take steps to ensure that disabled people are not put at a disadvantage because of their disability, and employers should avoid situations where a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of the employer, or any physical features of an employer's premises, substantially disadvantage a disabled person. An employer should conduct an assessment to determine what steps would be reasonable.

The term 'reasonable adjustment' is, of course, open to interpretation, but in terms of test-taking it might for example include:

- Providing easy access to the test room for wheelchair users
- Providing large print versions for people with visual impairments, or facilitating the use of their own magnifying equipment
- Allowing the use of spell-checkers where this is not central to the skill to be tested

More details on possible adjustments to tests and the testing situation will be given later in these guidelines.

Reasonable adjustments in the workplace might include:

- Adjusting premises (eg ramps, positioning of light switches, shelves etc, changes to lighting, or something as simple as changing the layout of furniture)
- Acquiring or modifying equipment
- Providing a reader or interpreter.

What counts as 'reasonable' is also subject to a range of factors, such as:

- Effectiveness of the adjustment
- Practicability (eg can the adjustment be made within a reasonable timescale)
- Financial and other costs (eg disruption)
- Financial and other resources of the employer.

Prospective employers must look proactively at job requirements and the effect on disabled people. An employer also needs to understand the particular disability's effect on a person's normal day to day activities and then consider what adjustment could be made. Then the employer should consider if the adjustments are reasonable.

Justification

Generally, if a disabled person is treated less favourably than a person without that disability, this is an example of *direct discrimination* and would be unlawful. If they are treated unfavourably for reasons that have arisen as a result of the disability (but not directly because of the disability itself), and there is no objective justification for this, this would be an example of *discrimination arising from disability* and would be unlawful. However, if an employer can *justify* discrimination arising from disability because it relates to something that is essential to the job, then this is allowed for under the provisions of the Act.

For example, suppose a candidate with a severe visual impairment applied for the role of bus driver. His or her disability would mean that they could not carry out the central function of the job, and their application could lawfully be rejected on this basis even though they would have been treated less favourably than a candidate without a visual impairment.

It is, however, important to remember that any justification needs to be both relevant and substantial. If a candidate was applying for a job where driving was not necessary, or where a reasonable accommodation could be made to avoid the need for driving (eg by reassigning duties, or utilising public transport), then no such justification could be made.

The concept of justification also extends to the use of tests. The employer should be able to demonstrate that:

- The skill or attribute being tested is essential to the job. This would usually be demonstrated by job analysis
- The disabled person could not perform the job well by way of a reasonable adjustment which in turn rendered this skill or attribute irrelevant

- The test is a valid measure of the relevant skill or attribute – as it applies to the content and nature of the job after any reasonable adjustment to the job.

In general, a test used in selection should not require an applicant to do things that they would not need to do in the job, otherwise a disability might diminish someone's test performance even though they could do the job perfectly well.

Employer knowledge

Employers need to take reasonable steps to find out about people's disabilities and what can be done to get around them. For example, a job application form might include wording such as:

"Our selection day includes some psychometric tests, which will involve taking tests at a computer. Please outline below any special needs you would have if you are invited to attend."

or:

"Our selection day includes some psychometric tests, which will involve paper and pencil tests and the manipulation and assimilation of information from several sources². Please outline below any special needs you would have if you are invited to attend."

Clearly an employer cannot be expected to make adjustments for a disabled person if they are genuinely unaware of the person's disability and could not reasonably be expected to know, and applicants will only be protected under the Act if they have told the employer in advance about their disability and needs. An important point, however, is that if any 'agent' of the employer is aware of the disability then the Act *does* apply. Given that disability can be a sensitive area, an individual may choose to inform a company's occupational health officer of their disability in confidence, who may then need to recommend any necessary adjustments without disclosing the nature of someone's disability. Other agents of an employer may include recruitment agencies.

Similarly, an individual may choose to confide in the HR professionals involved in the recruitment, but ask for the potential line manager not to be informed. It may of course be possible to make an adjustment to the way in which tests are administered or interpreted without informing the line manager of any specific disability, but the individual may request that no adjustment is made to the selection process. In this instance, the HR professional may need to advise them of any possible consequences of this decision.

It is lawful to ask questions relating to reasonable adjustments that would be needed for an assessment. It is important to bear in mind, however, that in practice, any information on disability or health obtained by an employer for purposes of making adjustments to recruitment or assessment, should, as far as possible, be held separately. Furthermore, it should not form part of the decision-making process about a job offer.

In case of possible discrimination claims later, it is strongly recommended that employers retain all correspondence about individual cases, and make careful notes of any oral discussions.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published a Code of Practice, which is an important resource for employers, employees, and job candidates. It incorporates best practice as indicated by the Equality Act 2010. It can be accessed at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/EqualityAct/employercode.pdf

² This is particularly relevant to some tests within OPP's ABLE Series.

The Disability Confident Scheme



The Disability Confident scheme encourages employers to recruit and retain staff who have disabilities. Through signing up to the scheme, employers are committing to:

- Challenging attitudes towards disability
- Increasing their understanding of disability
- Removing barriers to employment of disabled people, including those with long term health conditions
- Ensuring disabled people have developmental opportunities to fulfil their potential

Example commitments:

- Guaranteeing an interview if an applicant meets the minimum or essential criteria for the job
- Offering disabled people opportunities e.g. work experience, work trials, apprenticeships etc
- Ensuring employees have appropriate disability equality awareness
- Launching coaching/mentoring schemes

The first commitment can mean that where a disabled person applies for a job, and tests are being used at an early stage of selection, the employer may decide that the individual may be taken forward to interview without completing any pre-interview psychometric tests that would normally be used. In such a case, however, the employer should clearly have a very carefully defined picture of what the 'minimum criteria' actually are.

Testing people with disabilities

General points

- Any discussion of this nature may seem to imply that 'people with disabilities' are a homogenous group. This is of course not the case; everyone is different. "Similar" disabilities may affect different people in very different ways, and many individuals may have multiple disabilities. Every individual is different and each testing session should be approached accordingly. This should also be borne in mind when reading the sections later in these guidelines on specific disabilities – not everyone with a visual disability is the same, for example
- As outlined in the previous section, employers should take reasonable steps in advance of any selection or testing process to find out about people's disabilities. This process should preferably involve the trained and qualified individual who will be administering and/or choosing the tests so that candidates can be given an informed picture of what they will be required to do

- Before considering any changes or adjustments to tests or other selection tools, the employer should consider what adjustments would be made to the job itself to accommodate the needs of that individual if they were appointed. It may be that the changes that would be made to the job mean that the test that would usually be used is not appropriate, and that another test, or some alternative assessment method, should be used instead. Employers should remember that they are assessing the individual for the job as it will be carried out after any adjustments have been made
- Employers should also think carefully about exactly which skills or attributes they are testing and then relate these back to the test they are using. In any test, part of the ability required to complete the task is about the skill or attribute the instrument is trying to measure, and part is about the technology or the mechanics of physically completing the test. For example, if the ability to read and understand written information is important but motor skills are not, an adjustment which could be made for testing individuals with poor motor skills might be to have someone sitting beside them who could fill in circles on an answer sheet for them. Careful thought about exactly what it is that needs to be assessed – what the real skills needed for the job actually are – will be essential in deciding what adjustments to make to the testing process
- Having thought through these issues and made an informed choice as to which tests to use, the employer should then decide on what adjustments should be made to the testing process. The advice and help of the candidates themselves should be sought – they have a wealth of experience of working with their particular disability. Suitably forewarned, they may also be able to bring additional equipment with them (such as magnifying devices), or be able to advise on where to obtain additional equipment. Employers may wish to consult OPP (in relation to OPP's psychometric tests), and advice and help can be sought from other relevant organisations – see Appendix 1 for contact details. This may be particularly important with candidates who have not taken psychometric tests before and who therefore have less of an idea what to expect
- It may be that having considered what changes could be made, it is decided that the test cannot be suitably adjusted, or that the necessary adjustments change the test in such a way as to make it unsuitable for the assessment. In this case, an employer may decide to put in place a 'guaranteed interview scheme'. Here, a disabled applicant who meets the minimum or essential criteria for the post is exempted from psychometric tests or other parts of the selection process, and is guaranteed an interview, on the basis that any adjustments to the testing process are likely to be unsatisfactory. Guaranteed interview schemes set up in this way are a reasonable adjustment and will be lawful; the 'Disability Confident' mentioned above is an example of such a scheme. Similarly, where online testing is being used as part of an initial sifting process, to be augmented by later face to face testing, it may be that disabled candidates can be exempted from the online stage. If an employer is in any doubt about what a reasonable adjustment would be, providing a guaranteed interview scheme for candidates with disabilities is a good defensive strategy in relation to a potential discrimination claim
- It is always important to prepare candidates for a testing session, but it is particularly important to prepare a candidate who has a disability. It is difficult for candidates to give advice on what sort of accommodation would suit them best if they cannot see what they are going to be given. If practice tests or preview leaflets are available, then the employer should distribute these to candidates well before the session and ask their opinion

- Disabled candidates may have had a more stressful journey than other candidates, and may need additional assistance in reaching the testing location. Time should be allowed to put them at their ease after arrival. In general, assistance should be offered but not forced on people
- Many different adjustments can be made to accommodate the needs of disabled people. In the sections on specific disabilities later in these guidelines, advice is given on the disabilities most commonly encountered. It would be impossible to produce a definitive list; there are many different people with many different kinds of disabilities to varying degrees, and some may have multiple disabilities. Broadly speaking, however, adjustments can be made to:
 - The test itself. Such adaptations may include, for example, large print or Braille versions of the test. Changes to the test itself are an attractive option because they demonstrate that the organisation is taking the needs of the disabled person seriously, and the 'work' is done by the test publisher rather than by the assessor. However, such changes are not always easily done, and suitably adapted versions of tests may not be available at short notice. Some tests may be difficult or impossible to adapt – for example, Braille reading of diagrammatic tests is not straightforward. Employers and other test users should also be aware that there is no such thing as the single standard adapted version of a test. Taking visual disabilities as an example, some candidates may prefer large print versions, some large print versions on particular coloured backgrounds, some Braille, some a combination of Braille text and large print images (or vice versa), some a version which can be scanned via a magnifying device or reader, and so on. This demonstrates that it is important to consult the candidate as to what will work for them
 - The testing process and ancillary materials. Many minor changes to materials may be quickly and easily accomplished, such as producing a blown-up version of an answer sheet. Test users may also need to change the instructions slightly, or make other minor changes
 - The test timing. Timing can be a particular problem for people with some disabilities. An individual using a magnifying device will take longer to scan the page than other candidates, so that in any given time they will be able to spend less time actually 'doing' the test. Similarly, having someone else to fill in the answer sheet for you will add to the time. Employers may wish to use an untimed power test, or to be more flexible about time limits
 - The equipment available – providing or ensuring that the candidate can provide special software, magnifying devices, hearing aids and so on
 - The testing room – looking at access (for example, for wheelchair users), lighting, heating, and so on
 - The help available, for example providing signers, people to help fill in answer sheets or turn pages, people to read out questions
- Much of this advice relates to the use of ability tests and other measures of maximal performance. This does not mean that care should not be taken with the use of personality questionnaires, but it is true that they are less likely to be problematic. Many of the issues around testing disabled people, such as time limits or dealing with graphical/pictorial material, do not apply to personality questionnaires, and it is much less likely that a disabled candidate will be treated less favourably than other candidates. If a candidate has been excused from completing the ability tests in a selection process, this does not automatically mean that they have to be excused from completing the personality questionnaire

- The advice given in these guidelines may seem to go against the principle of having standardised tests which are the same for everyone. In fact, there is no contradiction. The testing situation is different for a disabled person anyway; the process of making a reasonable adjustment simply goes some way toward bringing the whole process of the test-person interaction for the disabled candidate into line with the experience of other candidates
- The list of specific disabilities which follows reflects the issues which are most commonly seen in practice by test users, and as a result perhaps pays more attention to ‘physical’ disabilities such as visual impairment than, for example, issues around mental health. This is not to belittle the importance of such conditions, but these issues are less often seen in the use of occupational tests and straightforward guidelines are impossible to establish

Candidates with visual disabilities

Phrases such as ‘visual impairment’, ‘visual disability’, ‘partially sighted’ and ‘blind’ cover a wide range. Many people in this broad group will have some sight, and different individuals will have very different ways of working in a testing situation. As mentioned above, it is very important that the employer talks to candidates well before the testing session in order to determine what adjustments need to be made.

Computer-based tests may give rise to particular issues. Many people with visual impairments have developed a range of strategies and tools in order to use computers effectively, such as speech synthesisers, screen magnifiers, changes to fonts, Braille display of written text and so on. These may not function well with computer-administered tests, which typically control the way in which information is presented, and may not allow for adjustments such as additional time. Online tests, administered remotely via the internet, provide an additional concern in that there is no human presence to help with the testing process. The advice of OPP should be sought about specific cases related to OPP’s own psychometric tests.

Possible adjustments for paper based tests might include:

- Computer scanning. Some candidates may ask for test materials to be scanned onto computer, from where they can change font sizes, use voice software etc. Again, permission must be sought in advance, and OPP will generally grant it, subject to any restrictions imposed by its licensors and provided the computer copy is destroyed after the testing session
- Large print versions of tests. Subject to any restrictions from its own licensors, OPP will typically allow clients to make large print photocopies of tests on a case by case basis, but test users must ask for permission first. (Enquiries may be directed to OPP’s Product Management Team.) When producing large print versions, all the materials should be considered – booklet, answer sheet, information booklets, etc. Note that some tests with a lot of physical materials, such as some in-tray exercises, may become unwieldy and impractical when rendered in large print. If possible, it is generally preferable to keep the original page size (eg A4), as some candidates may read by picking up materials and holding them close to their eyes. Different candidates will prefer different degrees of enlargement – those with a mild impairment may request only a small degree, eg to 14pt as this is quicker to read than, say, 22pt text. Enlargements greater than 22pt or 24pt are often impractical, and it may not be possible to enlarge tests containing figures and graphs even to this degree. For these reasons, it is not always possible to produce a single “standard” large print version of a test

- Magnifiers. Some candidates will bring, or ask to be provided with, magnifying devices; they should of course be allowed to use these
- Braille versions of tests. Although this would seem to be an obvious solution, Braille tests may in fact only be suitable in some cases, for a number of reasons:
 - Many people with a visual disability will have very limited or zero proficiency in Braille; most estimates are that less than 5% of this group read Braille fluently. Employers should never assume that a candidate is proficient in this language
 - Not all tests will be available in Braille, and “translation” into Braille will not necessarily be quick or easy. While computer software has in theory made Braille adaptation much more straightforward, in practice this process can still be problematic. For example, there are varying conventions as to how tabular material is best presented in Braille, and different candidates may find one format easier than another
 - Some tests may be very difficult or impossible to render effectively into Braille, for example tests that include pictures, figures, graphs and tables
- Reading. Tests can be transcribed onto a computer audio file, or read out by an amanuensis (a physical reader there in the testing room), although this is only really suitable for tests without graphical content, and there could be an issue with any personality inventories that ask questions which appear to be in any way confidential. An amanuensis would also be required to write down the candidate’s responses
- Adjustments to timing. All of the methods mentioned above will tend to increase the time taken by a candidate, and additional time should be given. It is difficult to give hard and fast rules for this, but often up to half as much time again will be needed. Administrators may find it useful to see how candidates perform after different time limits by getting them to note how far they have reached at, say, ten minute intervals after the “standard” test duration. If more than one test is to be administered, it is a good idea to administer the less time-pressured one first, and use the time taken to complete this test as a guideline for how long to allow for the subsequent tests
- While not strictly an adjustment, correct lighting is extremely important. Low light levels, uneven light, lighting which produces glare on testing materials and so on are likely to have a particular impact on a visually impaired candidate. Test administrators may wish to check the test room’s lighting levels with the candidate before any actual testing begins

It can be seen that the type of adjustment needed will depend both on the particular nature of the candidate’s visual disability and also on the nature of the test material. When asked about what adjustments will work best for them, candidates should be given sufficient information about the nature and the format of the test to allow them to make an informed decision, with the caveat that not all adjustments may always be practicable or possible.

Candidates with dyslexia

Up to 10% of the UK population have symptoms of dyslexia to some degree and they represent the largest single group of people with disabilities who are likely to undertake selection tests. While dyslexia mainly affects reading and spelling, people with dyslexia often also have difficulties in organising and planning. Although some authorities believe that people with dyslexia may tend to be more creative or innovative than others, these candidates are likely to be at a disadvantage in a timed multiple-choice ability test where there is a need to quickly read and mentally organise information and then choose particular set answers.

Many people with dyslexia will have had a formal assessment which may help them decide how best to approach a testing session. A number of adjustments can be made when testing people with dyslexia, including:

- Having an administrator read the instructions aloud and explain the examples (as opposed to simply allowing the candidate to read the instructions). This is standard practice for many tests, but may have an implication for the use of online or other computerised tests, where spoken instruction is not usually available. In some cases, it may be possible to use synthesised speech
- The use of synthesised speech, via a text reader and computer, may be useful for some candidates
- Allowing additional time. Many candidates will have been given extra time in public examinations such as GCSEs, and asking them about this can provide a good initial basis for timing adjustments. As with testing people with a visual impairment, the administrator can ask the candidate to mark testing materials with the number of questions completed at specific time intervals

As with any testing situation, it is important to consider how the mechanics of the test relate to the skill being tested and the particular disability of the candidate. If, for example, a central and essential part of the job requires rapid reading and assimilation of written information, and there is no way around this, then it is very clear why a test containing a great deal of written information might be appropriate, irrespective of an individual's disability. If this is not the case, then it is more difficult to justify the use of such a test with a dyslexic candidate.

Candidates with hearing disabilities

Most ability tests and personality tests are visual in nature, and hence little or no adjustment is likely to be needed to the test itself; however a number of adjustments should be considered in the way in which testing is carried out.

- Employers should consult the candidate as to what method of administration will work best – for example, can they lip-read, or is an interpreter (“signer”) required? If an interpreter is used, they should be next to the candidate and the administrator should ensure that they look at the candidate, not the interpreter
- Test administrators should talk in a clear and deliberate way, but not exaggeratedly slowly, or by shouting. They should look directly at the candidate and avoid covering their mouth or turning away (this makes lip-reading difficult)
- One-to-one testing is preferable, but if the candidate is tested as part of a group, they should sit where they have a clear view of the administrator.
- Candidates may not speak fluently and should be consulted as to how they wish to ask any questions during the testing process; they may need to be provided with paper in order to do so. The administrator may also need to write down any explanations or additional instructions
- Test administrators should remember that, for fluent signers, British Sign Language (BSL) is often their ‘first’ language and spoken – and written – English is their second language. Candidates from North America (and elsewhere) may not understand BSL

Some tests are unsuitable for candidates with a hearing impairment, such as group exercises, or computer-based tests with uncaptioned audio content or video. As many candidates may also have difficulties with oral communication, exercises such as presentations, role plays and negotiation exercises are also likely to have problems.

Candidates with a motor impairment

A number of adjustments may need to be made when testing candidates with a motor impairment:

- Straightforward access to the testing room and other facilities should be organised, for wheelchair users and others
- Desks, tables, chairs and other equipment should be at a suitable height, or adjustable
- Candidates may need to bring along software, computers, or specialist equipment which should be accommodated (eg by providing sufficient space, power points, time for setup etc)
- Some candidates may have difficulty handling test materials, or turning pages, although many will have equipment to help them to do this. Issues may however arise when a test requires multiple booklets or materials (eg an in-tray exercise). Candidates should be made aware of the format of materials and consulted as to the best approach
- Alternative methods may be needed to notate the answers to questions; candidates may be unable to fill in an answer circle on an answer sheet, and it is unlikely that this ability is related to the skill or attribute the test is measuring. Notating answers may involve specialised equipment or the use of an amanuensis; in either case, more time may need to be allowed for the test
- Many computer-administered tests may not readily be adaptable to the specialised equipment required by some candidates. In this case an alternative should be used
- Longer breaks may need to be allowed between tests, or breaks allowed for during longer exercises (such as personality questionnaires or in-trays)
- When administering a test to a wheelchair user, test administrators may prefer to sit down rather than stand. Crouching or bending over rather than sitting may appear patronising

Candidates with a speech impairment

Candidates with a speech impairment, such as a severe stammer, may be less likely to ask questions, especially in a group testing session; this could in some circumstances put them at a disadvantage. Administrators may wish to consider one-to-one testing, or asking candidates for questions individually, rather than asking the whole group.

Candidates with a learning disability

It is not generally recommended that standard occupational tests, of the kind published and distributed by OPP, are used for candidates with learning disabilities. Standard personality questionnaires are also likely to be problematic; candidates may not understand the questions, resulting in an inaccurate profile.

Interpreting test results

A key advantage of psychometric tests is that they are standardised; all candidates take the same test in the same way, and their results are compared using a common norm group. When testing disabled people, conditions are no longer standardised in quite the same way, and results need to be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, some general rules can be identified:

- Scoring of test results will typically be done in the usual way, although additional care should be taken where marks or numbers need to be transferred from, for example, a large print version of an answer sheet. Scorers should look out for any positional errors in answer sheet completion. It is also worthwhile noting down additional information such as the number of questions completed, number of questions right and wrong (and hence accuracy) and, if available, scores at different time intervals recorded during any additional time given
- Comparing test results with a norm group is problematic. Where extra time has been given, employers should look at the standard score achieved at different time limits, and also look at accuracy. This may give a feel for the candidate's "true" level of ability. There are however no definitive rules, which can be given here. It is important to try to look at a candidate's level of performance as compared with the requirements of the job, rather than simply comparing their results numerically against other candidates. This may involve bringing in other information relating to their ability, from other sources
- One specific area to consider concerns the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM). A test is likely to be a less reliable measure of a disabled candidate's ability than it is of another candidate's. As a result, the SEM published in the test manual is likely to be an underestimate. As a rule of thumb, employers may consider doubling the value of the SEM when interpreting the test results of a disabled person
- Another specific question concerns the use of "cut-off" scores in selection. An employer may have decided only to recruit people who achieve a certain test score or better, and reject those who do not reach this level. Ideally such cut-off scores will have been determined as part of a validation study. Applying the standard cut-off to a disabled candidate may be inappropriate and a more flexible approach should be applied
- Employers may be tempted to ask for a norm group based on disabled applicants. This would not be appropriate; in any selection process, whether or not disabled applicants are involved, the norm group most suitable to the job being applied for should be used. Also, producing a "representative group of disabled people" would be an impossible task. Every disabled person is different, every impairment is different and interacts with ability test performance in different ways; this is clearly true of disabled people as a whole, but is also true of groups of people with similar disabilities. Blind or partially sighted people, for example, are not a single homogeneous group whose abilities are solely defined by their disability
- The interpretation of personality questionnaire results, in contrast, is likely to be relatively straightforward. Except in some specific cases (eg the use of a questionnaire with a high vocabulary level with individuals with a learning disability – a practice which would in any event be inappropriate), there should be no reason why personality questionnaire results should not be interpreted in the standard way. Note that the personality questionnaires used by HR practitioners are designed to be used with individuals within the "normal range" of human personality and are NOT designed to be used as diagnostic or counselling tools for people with mental illness or a mental health issue

Appendix one: contact details

Action on Hearing Loss

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Blind in Business

<http://www.blindinbusiness.org.uk>

Blind in Business

4th Floor

1 London Wall Buildings

London EC2M 5PG

Tel: 020 7588 1885

British Dyslexia Association

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Unit 8, Bracknell Beeches

Old Bracknell Lane

Bracknell RG12 7BW

Switchboard: 0333 405 4555

Helpline: 0333 405 4567

British Psychological Society

To download a number of guidelines on testing people with disabilities, go to:

<http://ptc.bps.org.uk/ptc/guidelines-and-information>

British Stammering Association

www.stammering.org

The British Stammering Association

15 Old Ford Road

London E2 9PJ

Tel: 020 8880 6590

DirectGov

www.gov.uk/browse/disabilities

Dyslexia Action

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

Dyslexia Action House

10 High Street

Egham, Surrey TW20 9EA

Tel: 0300 303 8840

Dyspraxia Foundation

<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>

Dyspraxia Foundation

8 West Alley,

Hitchin,

Herts, SG5 1EG.

Helpline: 01462 454 986

Email: info@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

Employers' Forum on Disability

www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Nutmeg House

60 Gainsford Street

London SE1 2NY

Tel: 020 7403 3020

Textphone: 020 7403 0040

Employers' Forum on Disability (NI)

www.efdni.org

Banbridge Enterprise Centre

Scarva Road Industrial Estate

Banbridge BT32 3QD

Tel: 028 4062 4526

Equality and Human Rights Commission

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Freepost

EASS Helpline

FPN6521

Tel: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Mencap

www.mencap.org.uk

Royal Mencap Society

Mencap National Centre

123 Golden Lane

London EC1Y 0RT

Tel: 0808 808 1111

Office for Disability Issues

www.officefordisability.gov.uk

Ground Floor

Caxton House

7–12 Tothill Street

London

SW1H 9DA

Email: fulfilling.potential@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

www.rnib.org.uk

105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Scope

www.scope.org.uk

6 Market Road

London N7 9PW

Helpline: 0808 800 3333

Email: helpline@scope.org.uk

