



FACTSHEET

COVID-19: RAPID RESPONSIBLE RECRUITMENT

APRIL 2020

As businesses respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19, this factsheet supports businesses undertaking rapid recruitment with practical steps on how to be responsible and inclusive recruiters at a time of crisis.

While many businesses are experiencing an extreme drop in demand because of the measures in place in response to COVID-19, others such as supermarkets (in particular deliveries), online retailers, pharmaceuticals, food manufacturing and logistics are finding they need to rapidly recruit to meet the demands of customers and communities.

How different employers respond is very much in the spotlight and this presents an opportunity for responsible employers to attract and retain the people they need in the short and long term.

Rapid recruitment can also be responsible and inclusive recruitment.

This factsheet outlines the principles of inclusive employment as they apply to recruitment at this time and some tips to make sure the experience is safe and fair for everyone involved.

For existing staff, please see our COVID-19 toolkit on [helping your employees stay well](#).

Changing labour market and conditions

COVID-19 has changed the UK and international labour markets overnight. We have moved from record high employment figures to huge uncertainty. Many organisations have frozen their recruitment, some are furloughing staff and others are making redundancies. At the same time, millions of essential workers and volunteers are needed for the COVID-19 response. The way we recruit and work has changed too:

- Working from home is now the rule in all but essential face-to-face roles.ⁱ
- Remote hiring has boomed – video interviews are the new norm and companies are finding new ways to onboard people virtually.ⁱⁱ
- Flexible working and flexible hours have come into their own as families juggle childcare or other caring responsibilities and adjust to a home working environment.

If you're recruiting, consider how you might target people from industries that are suffering and groups that are worst hit such as young people, women and low earnersⁱⁱⁱ and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds^{iv}.





Inclusive employment

Business in the Community's (BITC) Employment Framework is relevant to employers looking to hire now. The stages can be described as:

Inspire: pre-employment support

Hire: removing barriers in recruitment processes

Grow: in-work support

Removing barriers in your recruitment process is the most effective way to open your doors to large pools of diverse talent at this time. It can also help to speed up recruitment by focusing only on what's needed to ensure someone can safely do the job.

Our [Inclusive Employment Toolkit](#) (for BITC members only) goes into more detail on the Employment Framework and also focuses on how businesses can meet skills and labour demands through widening their talent pool to include excluded groups. See also BITC's How to do Diverse Recruitment.^v

Here are some of the ways you can remove barriers in your hiring process without slowing things down.



Hire: Seven ways you can remove barriers

1. Improve your careers website by including images of diverse people, simplifying user journey and getting rid of jargon

2. Recruit based on behaviour and skills, not experience or qualifications

3. Remove jargon or technical language from job descriptions – see our [Avoiding Jargon and Technical Language factsheet](#)

4. Remove the criminal records tick box from job application forms and ask about convictions later in the recruitment process. Join more than 140 organisations that have signed up to our campaign [Ban the Box](#).

5. Target recruitment activities to excluded groups through partnerships or advertising

6. Include people from excluded groups on interview panels

7. Offer apprenticeships and traineeships that come with training and qualifications – for all ages

Impact story: Bupa supporting young people

In response to the increased pressures arising from COVID-19, Bupa has created a new temporary Home Assistant role which will help contribute to the safe running of their care homes by providing housekeeping, kitchen and admin support. Recognising the challenges young people can face gaining employment without previous work experience, and the disproportionate impact sector closures have had on young people, Bupa has worked with its partner Movement to Work to





promote the role to young people facing barriers to work.

Removing barriers in the recruitment process

Many people from excluded groups such as young people, ex-military personnel, ex-offenders, people who have experienced homelessness and refugees are ready to work.

Businesses taking action to change their hiring processes to remove barriers for one of these groups are also likely to be removing barriers and supporting sustainable employment for other groups.

They may have been taking part in employability activities and work placements that have now been stopped as part of the COVID-19 response, searching for work but encountering barriers, or working in insecure employment that has rapidly come to an end.

Responsible employers may already have existing employment programmes with trusted partnerships in place that can quickly add to your recruitment pipeline and help you meet increases in demand fast.

Impact story: Boots UK supports excluded groups while meeting high demand

As a Ban the Box employer, with a commitment to reducing reoffending through employment, Boots UK continues to grow and strengthen its long-term partnerships while supporting communities in a time of need. As part of their wider response to the COVID-19 crisis, Boots has taken a number of actions including working with its recruitment agency to provide paid employment opportunities to people with criminal convictions in roles across their supply chain. They seek to offer a range of opportunities to people of all ages and backgrounds and this also includes those who have been made redundant or furloughed over recent times.

40%

Of young people find that a clear job description is the most helpful thing during recruitment^{vi}

Addressing stigma and creating an inclusive culture

A common success factor highlighted by businesses successfully employing excluded groups is the importance of creating an inclusive culture for everyone in the workplace. This means that once people are in work, they have access to the support they need without being singled out. Employee assistance programmes, a supportive HR team, buddy systems and staff networks can all help people to settle in and feel like they belong.

Impact story: Morrisons creates new jobs and offers inclusive support

Morrisons has created 3,500 new jobs to meet soaring demand for its home delivery service and guaranteed existing and new staff a 6% bonus over the full financial year as a thank you for their hard work in these demanding times. An extra 2,500 pickers and drivers alongside an extra 1,000 staff in distribution centres will keep the wheels turning and ensure customers continue to receive essential food and household items. The bonus applies from February and will be paid quarterly to all temporary and permanent staff, including colleagues who are off sick or in isolation. In addition, a new colleague hardship fund will aim to support colleagues who are in financial difficulty as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Staff will be able to apply for funds if they experience a financial setback and are struggling to make ends meet. Staff who are affected either because of self-isolation – or due to looking after close family or vulnerable community members –





will also be eligible for sick pay, alternative shifts or holiday.

Modern slavery, supply chains and the gig economy

Awareness of modern slavery in the UK is growing, with more and more victims being identified each year. Modern slavery has been found in a wide range of sectors and can occur within your direct operations or supply chain.

IN 2019, 10,627 POTENTIAL VICTIMS WERE REFERRED TO THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM, A 52% INCREASE FROM 2018.^{vii}

Even for businesses that have robust modern slavery policies in place, as pressure on hiring increases, the temptation could be to cut corners. Other businesses without such policies in place could find themselves at an increased risk.

With certain forms of exploitation such as car washes, nail bars and the commercial sex industry becoming less profitable, organised crime groups will look to exploit victims in other ways. This could be through forced labour in agriculture or food delivery, forced criminality through doorstep scam schemes, or online sexual exploitation.

Now more than ever, businesses need to ensure they are taking all the necessary precautions to identify potential victims and reduce the risk of modern slavery occurring within their business or supply chains.

Actions you can take

- Identify risk areas within the supply chain and reach out to understand what measures are being taken to prevent modern slavery.

- Ensure all hiring managers are trained to understand the risks around modern slavery and spot the signs.
- Take special care when outsourcing labour and be especially diligent if using a new labour provider.
- Provide information on modern slavery as part of the induction for new workers.
- Display guidance on COVID-19 in different languages and include information on how an employee can get help if they are being controlled.

There are a wide range of resources and support available to help you address modern slavery. To get started or to improve your modern slavery response, the business-led initiative [Stronger Together](#) has made many of their toolkits available free of charge.

Tips for employers recruiting rapidly

- Do** think creatively about solving your recruitment challenges and aim to open up your recruitment to the people who need it most.
- Do** look at how you can expand existing programmes or fast-track individuals already engaging in your programmes to get them into much-needed roles.
- Do** consider the longer term. What will happen to these staff once the crisis response is over? Are there permanent roles you can look to offer in the future? What skills and experience can you help them gain while they're with you that will improve their chances of finding a new role once this work is over?
- Don't** let unnecessary barriers get in the way but be sure to carefully consider and be transparent about the checks you do need.





Don't skimp on induction/onboarding, training and support for your new starters. Make sure they know where they can go for help adjusting to their new role.

Don't set people up to fail. If you're targeting excluded groups for employment (rather than simply removing barriers) be sure to do so through existing programmes and/or a trusted partner to ensure candidates are getting the support they need.

Useful organisations

Several organisations are supporting employers in those industries that need to hire quickly. Here are just a few:

Staffline and training provider **PeoplePlus** have partnered with major supermarkets and food supply chain companies to help people looking for work. Jobseekers or employers with large recruitment needs can visit www.feedthenation.co.uk

The Association of Labour Providers is part of a collaboration to support displaced workers to transfer to where work is available. Employers can register on the Essential Workers Needed Portal. <https://labourproviders.org.uk/spare-worker-availability-portal>

Movement to Work is supporting employers with their continuity plans by communicating news and advertising vacancies with a focus on young people. www.movementtowork.com/news/covid-19

NHS Employers has collated resources for NHS workforce leaders looking to increase workforce supply and bring back staff who may have recently retired. www.nhsemployers.org/covid19

CIPD has regularly updated advice for employers. www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/health-safety/coronavirus-factsheet

The Slave Free Alliance is offering support to employers to identify and respond to modern slavery risks resulting from COVID-19. www.slavefreealliance.org/modern-slavery-and-covid19-coronavirus/

Reed has launched a Keep Britain Working campaign to preserve jobs and protect livelihoods www.keepbritainworking.com/

ⁱ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Public Health England, [Guidance for Employers and Businesses on Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#), April 2020

ⁱⁱ Vozza, S [How Covid-19 is changing the recruiting and hiring process](#), Fast Company, March 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ Joyce, R and Xu, X [Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which workers are most exposed?](#) Institute for Fiscal Studies, April 2020

^{iv} Business in the Community (2020) Ethnicity and the Economic Impact of Covid-19: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/fact-sheet/covid-19-ethnicity-and-economic-impact>

^v Business in the Community (2012) How to conduct diverse recruitment – available on request

^{vi} BITC 2015 Youth Survey

^{vii} National Crime Agency, National Referral Mechanism Statistics, 2019

