



BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY

OPENING DOORS: FUTURE TALENT FRAMEWORK

Inclusive Recruitment in Action

Opening Doors: the 2026 Framework

Opening Doors is Business in the Community's flagship inclusive recruitment framework and a key tool within our Future Talent mission, helping employers remove barriers to employment and create fairer, more accessible recruitment processes.

Since its launch in 2022, Opening Doors has supported organisations of all sizes to strengthen inclusive recruitment practices and widen access to employment opportunities. This updated 2026 Framework reflects changing labour market challenges and recruitment practices, including the growing importance of pathways into work, accessibility, candidate experience, and the responsible use of AI in recruitment.

The Framework is structured around Five Keys for Inclusive Recruitment. Together, these set out 27 practical actions that provide employers with a roadmap to attract, assess and recruit talent more widely, while supporting under-represented groups to enter and progress in employment. In doing so, the Framework helps employers unlock future talent from the widest possible pool of candidates.



FIVE KEYS. 27 PRACTICAL ACTIONS.

1 Create pathways into work

2 Demonstrate your commitment to fair access

3 Write inclusive job adverts

4 Focus on skills

5 Prioritise accessibility and eliminate bias



Unlock future talent from the widest possible pool of candidates.

KEY 1



Create pathways into work for untapped talent

Many people face barriers to employment long before they apply for a job. Employers can help address these barriers by reaching people who may otherwise be overlooked and providing opportunities that support their development and progression towards employment.

This key focuses on creating pathways into work for under-represented groups through partnerships, skills development and practical experience. Together, these actions help employers identify and engage untapped talent, expand access to opportunities and support individuals to build the confidence, skills and experience needed to access and succeed in employment.

1a

Partner with organisations that support untapped talent into work.

1b

Provide pathways into work that help untapped talent develop the skills, experience and confidence needed to access and progress in employment.

“Opening doors today creates opportunities for tomorrow.”

KEY 2



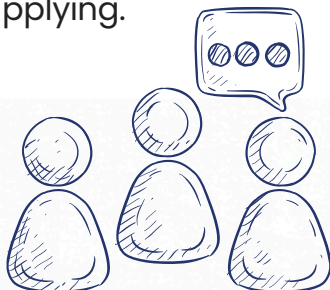
Embed and demonstrate your commitment to fair access

Candidates are more likely to apply when they can see that fairness is embedded throughout an organisation, not just reflected in individual recruitment activities.

A clear and visible commitment to inclusive recruitment helps build trust, widen access to opportunities and create a more consistent candidate experience.

This key focuses on embedding fairness within organisational culture, governance and recruitment practices, and demonstrating that commitment through communications, partnerships and visible action.

Together, these actions help employers align those involved in hiring, build trust with candidates and create an environment in which a wider range of people can feel confident applying.



2a

Embed inclusive recruitment within organisational governance, including accountability for recruitment outcomes and consistency across hiring managers.

2b

Advertise your vacancies through a range of channels and trusted local organisations that can reach underrepresented groups.

2c

Provide training on inclusive recruitment and ensure your employees understand your commitment to inclusive recruitment.

2d

Engage your suppliers, including recruitment agencies, on inclusive recruitment and ensure that they adhere to your inclusive recruitment ambitions.

2e

Publish your value statement(s) and all diversity pledges and commitments on your website.

2f

Use diverse images and role models in all your public-facing communications.

KEY 3



Use comprehensive job adverts with inclusive language

Recruitment information and job adverts are often a candidate's first experience of an employer. Clear, accessible and inclusive communication helps candidates understand the opportunity, assess whether it is right for them and navigate the recruitment process with confidence.

This key focuses on removing unnecessary complexity and ensuring candidates receive the information they need to make informed decisions. Together, these actions help employers communicate opportunities clearly, set transparent expectations and encourage applications from a wider range of candidates.

3a

Remove jargon.

3b

Use neutral language.

3c

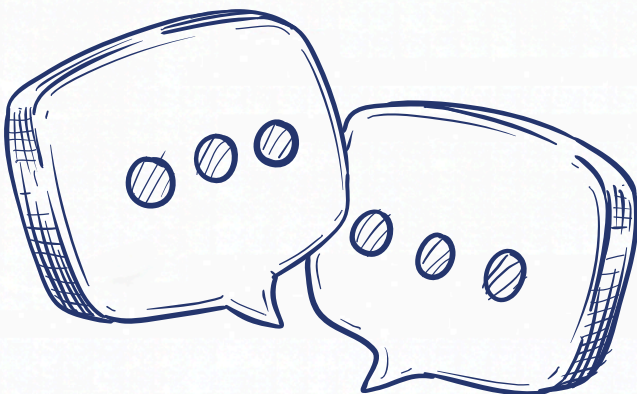
Include all essential information in the job description, including the role's day-to-day activities, salary, working hours and location.

3d

Provide information about relevant HR policies, e.g., flexible working or the recruitment of people with convictions.

3e

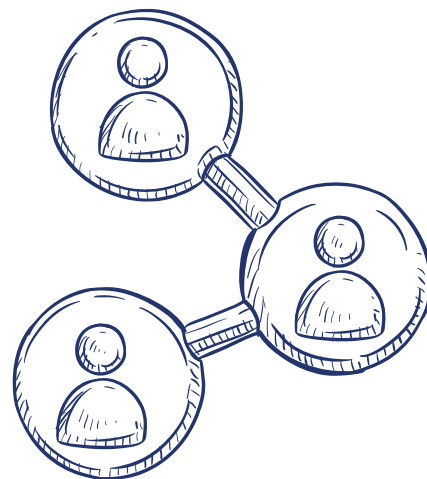
Set out the different stages of the application process and the associated timeframes.



KEY 4



Focus on the skills needed to do the job



Traditional recruitment processes often place too much emphasis on qualifications, previous job titles or linear career pathways, which can exclude talented candidates with the skills and potential to succeed. Skills can be gained through many routes, including employment, education, volunteering, caring responsibilities and lived experience. Focusing on essential skills rather than traditional credentials helps employers access wider talent pools, identify talent based on capability and create fairer routes into work.

This key focuses on recognising and assessing skills fairly, while helping candidates understand and develop the capabilities needed to succeed. Through skills-based recruitment and constructive feedback, employers can support candidates to demonstrate their potential, learn from recruitment experiences and progress towards employment.

4a

Ask for skills and potential rather than experience and qualifications.

4d

Consider whether you can accept any non-UK equivalents of qualifications and experience required.

4b

Only ask for skills that are really needed, and at the level that the role requires.

4e

Ensure each stage of application and assessment is appropriate for assessing a candidate's skills and capabilities.

4c

Recognise non-traditional or formal work experience, e.g., volunteering.

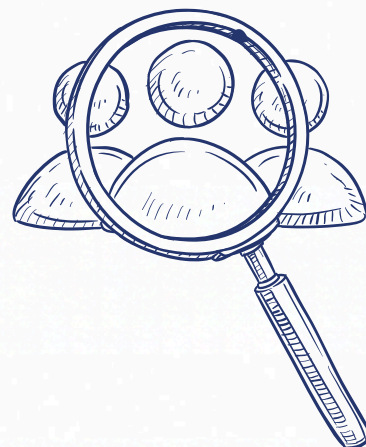
4f

Provide constructive feedback to applicants at key stages of the process to help them develop their skills and improve future applications.

KEY 5



Prioritise accessibility and eliminate bias



Recruitment processes can unintentionally create barriers that prevent talented people from accessing opportunities or demonstrating their potential.

Employers have an important role in identifying and removing these barriers so that all candidates can participate fairly in the recruitment process.

This key focuses on creating accessible and equitable recruitment practices through consistent and fair processes, data-informed decision making and responsible use of technology. Together, these actions help employers reduce bias, remove unnecessary obstacles and enable candidates from all backgrounds to compete fairly for opportunities.

5a

Remove the question about criminal records from application forms (in line with the Ban the Box campaign).

5b

Include diverse colleagues on interview panels.

5c

Ask all candidates if they need any adjustments at every stage of the process.

5d

Advertise opportunities and accept applications through accessible channels, devices, formats and languages.

5e

Specify if the role allows any form of flexibility.

5f

Collect and monitor diversity data throughout the recruitment process to identify and address disparities in outcomes for different groups.

5g

Perform assurance reviews before procuring or using AI-enabled recruitment tools, take action where needed, and monitor regularly.

5h

Be clear with candidates about how AI is used in your recruitment process and how candidates may use AI.

Take the next step.
Sign up now and help open
2 million jobs to wider talent.



VISIT:
bitc.org.uk/opening-doors



Business in the Community (BITC) champions responsible business as essential for long term economic growth and resilience. We convene, campaign, and consult with business to tackle society's most pressing challenges—from climate change and place-based regeneration to inequality, workplace wellbeing, and inclusive growth.

Founded by His Majesty King Charles III in 1982, BITC has over four decades of experience in engaging business and delivering measurable impact in both business and in communities through evidence-based interventions. As a trusted partner to business and government, BITC convenes leadership, influences policy, and accelerates action—helping shape a future-ready economy that works for everyone.

Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London
N1 7RQ

www.bitc.org.uk
020 7566 8650

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