



The Guardian Jobs guide to inclusive recruitment



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Inclusivity is a key issue in recruitment, with much more needing to be done to ensure that the UK workforce is truly representative. So how can you make sure your business is doing all it can to attract, and retain, a wide-range of talent?

To give some guidance on how to make these changes, Guardian Jobs has produced a dedicated guide to help you foster a more inclusive recruitment process, and how to retain those new recruits.

In this guide, writer and author Kerry Hudson looks beyond London and advises on the benefits of a financially and geographically accessible recruitment process as she seeks to shed light on how to make your hiring as accessible and inclusive as possible.



Recruiters, try looking North (and East, and West)

Talent can be found across all the regions of the UK - make sure you're not simply relying on geography for your next hire.

A publishing industry survey into the diversity and regional representation of 6,432 employees, representing 42 organisations across the sector, found a huge bias of those who grew up, well, anywhere south of Birmingham.

The survey, described by the Publishing Association as the most comprehensive ever in the UK, found that 47.4% of respondents grew up in the South East of England, London and the East of England with 15.1% of those hailing from London.

That publishing, like so many other sectors, is London-centric is news to no one. However, the fact that their recruitment was also so Southern-centric has raised alarm bells in an industry which, in recent years, has seen many publishers implement diversity drives including the appointment of dedicated diversity and inclusion managers, initiatives to ensure more diversity at executive level, mentoring schemes and subsidised rent for entry level staff.

One of the largest publishers in the UK, Penguin Random House, have stated that their, 'ambition is for both our new hires and the authors we acquire to reflect UK society by 2025. This means we want our new authors and colleagues to be representative of the UK population, taking into account ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social mobility and disability.'



If you were going to the supermarket you wouldn't shop one aisle so why do the same in recruitment? Take those few extra steps and ensure you're accessing the very best new hires.



So why are publishers, like so many other London-centric organisations, continuing to fall short in recruiting from the breadth of the UK?

Perhaps it's because the term 'cultural fit' still has a lot to answer for. After all, what does that really mean except, 'someone just like the rest of us, please'? It's surprising this is still such a pervasive element, either explicitly or implicitly, of many company's recruitment structure when several research studies have shown, not just a moral case for diversity, but also a strong business case. McKinsey and Company's research across the UK, US and Latin America showed that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity were '35%' more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians'. And companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have the same results.

So, what can employers do to ensure they're not just those on their doorstep but drawing on a talent pool from all parts of the UK?

Make connections

The first step is refreshing your recruitment marketing and consider creating links with regional organisations from your sector. For instance, to help meet their 2025 targets, Penguin Random House targets young people who may not otherwise have considered a career in publishing and, to date, have worked with 270 young people in nine cities from Glasgow, to Birmingham, to Taunton - selecting each location based on the Sutton Trust's map of social mobility cold spots across the UK.

Encourage your regional contacts to amplify your recruitment ads through their own channels - a study by Jobvite revealed that, 48%, nearly half, of candidates said they used social media when searching for their most recent job.

Consider your applicants

When shortlisting, take time to review geographical spread of your candidates. Does it make sense for the recruiting team to travel to an equidistant location or hold interviews in more than one location? While this might seem like an unnecessary expense, it allows you to see candidates when they haven't been on a train since 5am. Therefore, the candidate who breezed in on the Victoria Line won't be given an unearned advantage.

If you are chained to HQ, give candidates who are travelling from farther away plenty of notice and provide interview times later in the working day so that they don't have to pay for peak or last-minute travel or for a hotel. Better still, offer a range of interview slots and give them the pick to level the playing field a little. You don't want to miss out on the ideal person simply because they couldn't afford exorbitant train fares. More on financial inclusivity in the next section.



Make the most of technology

Consider remote options for the first-round interviews. Yes, interviews conducted by telephone or Skype can give an entirely different impression of a candidate but in an ever-more digital and global workplace seeing how well they can hold their own online and over the phone as well as in person could be a huge asset, while ensuring you can reach those far and wide across the UK without a cost to either party.

Pay your interns

Unpaid internships are a sure way to exclude most of those who are not based in the south. Particularly if your organisation is in London, expecting your intern to cover their own expenses and accommodation in the 19th most expensive city in the world is guaranteed to exclude a huge proportion of your potential employees. If you want the best then pay your interns and ensure you're recruiting them at the beginning of their career.

If you were going to the supermarket you wouldn't shop one aisle so why do the same in recruitment? Take those few extra steps and ensure you're accessing the very best new hires.



Financially inclusive interviews

In a competitive job market, the interview process can be a drain on resources. Make sure you're doing enough to attract a wide pool of candidates, whatever their means.

The chance to impress in an interview shouldn't be based upon a candidate's access to ready cash but often it is.

When the ideal metrics for recruitment are based on skill, experience, knowledge, passion and personality fit, it's hard to understand how recruitment processes which are financially prohibitive enough to result job seekers being disadvantaged or even entirely excluded has gone unchecked for so long.

Finding that dream job isn't just time redoing your CV and trawling through job ads, it's an expensive business too. A recent report commissioned by Barclays Bank found that graduates had to spend an average of £506.55 before they secured their first job, often turning to loans from credit cards or family to cover the costs. More concerning is that 43% had had to turn down interviews because they couldn't afford the associated costs and 25% of graduates had to attend more than five interviews before securing a job.

This doesn't just apply to cash-strapped graduates either. Anyone applying to organisations in a different city will likely feel the sting to their finances in the process of changing jobs. Those expenses include last minute travel costs and accommodation - neither of which is cheap in most UK cities - plus the loss of a day's work to attend the interview and those extra little costs that all add up: new clothes, a decent haircut, breakfasts and lunches on the run.

If a candidate is lucky, and makes it to the second round of interviews, they'll have to shell out the same again (and again if there's a third round). And the reality is that most job hunters may go through many cycles of this savings-draining process before successfully landing a position.

Of course, you want the best people. You want your company to have a positive public image. You want to be as inclusive as possible. These are three fairly integral principals for most organisations. So why are there still many aspects of recruitment which are a barrier to these aims? And what can you do to attract the candidates that are most suited for the job, not simply the best off financially, by ensuring your recruitment methods are truly financially inclusive?

Simple: just imagine you're covering your candidate's costs out of your own pocket.

If you're wondering how effective a full day of group interviewing is, ask yourself if you would consider it a good investment if you were paying for the travel, accommodation and time of each of the attendees.



Show potential employees that you're an employer committed to excellence in your workplace by offering a set amount contribution towards interview costs.

If you're trying to decide whether, actually, Skype or telephone for the first-round interviews would suffice, do a cost-benefit analysis as though it was your own cash being spent for each thirty-minute face to face interview.

Better still, take on a greater share of the financial burden of those interviews. Put your money where your mouth is and show potential employees that you're an employer committed to excellence in your workplace by offering a set amount contribution towards interview costs or the financial incentive of a refund of travel costs for all candidates who reach the second round.



Put yourself ahead by making your recruitment process financially inclusive and showing respect and care for your employees before they are even on your payroll.

You might be wondering why in these uncertain, straightened times, when the job market is more competitive than ever and everyone's painfully aware of the bottom line this should be the concern of the employer? The answer is that recruitment, and the associated expense, really is a two-way street.

A recent report by Oxford Economics showed that the average cost of replacing an employee in the UK is £30,614 per employee with the biggest proportion of that, a staggering £25,000 plus, arising from 'loss of productivity caused by the time it takes - 28 weeks on average - for a new recruit to get up to speed'.



Show you're making the climb a little less steep for those top candidates who might not have unlimited financial means.



So, the real question is really whether you can afford to hire the wrong candidate. The one who'll leave after six months or the one who never quite gets their training wheels off? Or, could you invest a little more in ensuring you meet the widest possible pool of candidates so that you find the perfect person for your organisation? You're only as good as the sum of the people who make up your business, who represent you, and when every company wants the best and brightest, things can get competitive.

Put yourself ahead by making your recruitment process financially inclusive and showing respect and care for your employees before they are even on your payroll. Show you're making the climb a little less steep for those top candidates who might not have unlimited financial means, the people who will bring real value to your company for the long-haul.

It's also worth remembering, that the candidate that's not quite experienced enough today may be the star of your sector in coming years - so make sure they remember you and your company fondly.

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