

Inclusive Recruitment Guide

Introduction

Inclusive recruitment helps organisations attract, hire, and retain the best talent by ensuring recruitment processes are fair, transparent, and accessible to everyone.

In the built environment, inclusive recruitment is essential to addressing skills shortages, improving representation, and building diverse, high-performing teams that reflect the communities we serve.

This guide outlines practical steps to remove barriers at every stage of the recruitment process.

What Is Inclusive Recruitment?

Inclusive recruitment is the practice of designing hiring processes that minimise bias, widen access to opportunities, and assess candidates fairly based on skills, potential, and experience.

It moves beyond intent and focuses on process, behaviour, and accountability.

Why Inclusive Recruitment Matters

Inclusive recruitment:

- Broadens the talent pool
- Improves workforce diversity
- Reduces unconscious bias
- Supports innovation and problem-solving
- Strengthens organisational reputation
- Improves retention and engagement

Common Barriers in Recruitment

1. Job Descriptions

- Overly technical or exclusionary language
- Unnecessary qualification requirements
- Gender-coded or informal wording

Good practice:

- Focus on essential skills
- Use clear, inclusive language
- Avoid “must have” lists that deter strong candidates

2. Advertising Roles

- Limited advertising channels
- Reliance on informal networks

Good practice:

- Advertise widely and transparently
- Partner with diverse networks and organisations
- Clearly state commitment to inclusion

3. Shortlisting

- Unconscious bias influencing decisions
- Overvaluing “cultural fit”

Good practice:

- Use structured criteria
- Shortlist against skills, not background
- Involve diverse decision-makers where possible

4. Interviews

- Unstructured interviews
- Subjective assessment

Good practice:

- Use structured, competency-based questions
- Ask the same core questions to all candidates
- Allow reasonable adjustments

5. Assessment & Selection

- Overreliance on confidence or communication style
- Bias towards familiarity

Good practice:

- Use skills-based assessments
- Value different communication styles

- Evaluate evidence, not assumptions

Inclusive Practices to Embed

Accessibility

- Provide clear application instructions
- Offer reasonable adjustments proactively
- Ensure venues and platforms are accessible

Transparency

- Share salary ranges where possible
- Explain recruitment stages clearly
- Provide feedback where feasible

Accountability

- Train hiring managers regularly
- Track recruitment data responsibly
- Review outcomes and adjust processes

Inclusive Onboarding

Inclusive recruitment doesn't stop at hiring.

Best practice includes:

- Structured onboarding
- Clear role expectations
- Access to mentoring or support networks
- Inclusive team introductions
- Ongoing check-ins during probation

The Role of Leaders

Leaders set the tone. Inclusive recruitment requires:

- Visible commitment
- Challenging bias when it appears

- Supporting fair decision-making
- Holding teams accountable for inclusive outcomes

Key Takeaways

- Inclusive recruitment strengthens teams and organisations
- Fair processes benefit everyone
- Small changes can make a big difference
- Inclusion must be embedded, not assumed