CASEY PEARSON: Thank you, everyone, for joining us today for the presentation Inclusive Design in the Recruitment Process. My name is Casey Pearson from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today.

I am happy to welcome Chris Fawcett today. Chris lives in the UK and works for Pearson, a global education company that aims to add life to a lifetime of learning so everyone can realize the life they imagine. He is Cochair of Pearson Able, the company's global disability ERG. Being registered as severely sight impaired, he uses his lived experience to raise awareness and advocate for the social model of disability and inclusive design, both within the global organization and in wider society. Thank you, Chris, for joining us today.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Thank you, Casey. It's a pleasure to be here. And thank you for inviting me to present on this topic. It's one that I'm quite passionate about myself. And looking forward to the next hour. And I hope everyone else on the call is, too. So thank you for that.

Yeah, so as Casey mentioned in the introduction, a bit about me. I worked for Pearson. And my journey in disability started off when I was quite a young boy, actually. My sight loss deteriorated when I was about four, but to the extent that I managed throughout all of my school career and my university career and even into the early stages of my working life without declaring my sight loss.

At the time, I could have been registered as sight impaired. But I chose not to. And it was about five or six years ago that my eyesight deteriorated further. And I had to come out the closet and actually start asking for some accommodations. And ever since then, it opened my eyes, for want of a better term, to inequity and disability equity and the importance of being inclusive in everything that we do in society.

So that's a little bit about me. I should give a visual description of myself, sorry. I should have done that right off the bat. I am a middle-aged white male with brownish-- oh, who am I kidding? It's grayish, side-parted hair. I'm sitting at my home office in Chelmsford, just outside of London. And I've got a Pearson background behind me today. So that's the visual description part.

So Casey's kindly agreed to drive my slides for me today. So I'll probably be saying, next slide, please, Casey. And this is the first time. Here we are.

So why do we care about inclusive design in the recruitment process? I was thinking about this, and I boiled it down into three buckets. There's probably more. And we'll probably find out some more things as we progress through the next hour.

But the categorization I went for is the first reason is from a moral and reputational standpoint. So if we think about society in general and being inclusive and including everyone in society, lots of companies nowadays, lots of employers, lots of state organizations, too, have DE&I targets. I'll talk a little bit about that in a moment. But in terms of being equitable and representative as an employer organization, most companies have DE&I strategies. And those should be lived and breathed through everything that the business does.

And part of what the business does or an employer does is it recruits. We've got people working for organizations. Almost without exception, organizations have employees. So the consideration of the needs of people with disabilities to meet the DE&I targets that pretty much all companies have is part of a company's brand.

And it's important to people with disabilities-- and you could apply this to any aspect of diversity-- that that company is seen to be living up to its pledges and its commitments and its strategies around DE&I. And if a company isn't living up to them, well, they ain't going to be attracting the diverse talent that they say they're going to. So it's a kind of circle, but it's really quite important.

But also, in terms of the commercial aspects of what a company does, be it providing services or be it producing something tangible, a product that they sell into society, a company is judged more and more increasingly in today's society about how it's living up to its own morals and values and sustainability pledges. And lots of things fall under that banner.

So that leaks into the second aspect of why I think we care about this stuff. It's the commercial aspect. So not only is it increasingly a buyer's market out there in terms of who people go to to provide services and products. But also, from a job perspective, too. Coming at it from a disability perspective, there's lots of evidence-- and this could be the subject of a whole other webinar-- on how actually including diversity and being inclusive and being representative of society is for an employer. There's lots of stats and evidence out there that shows that companies and employers are more profitable and successful when they truly reflect the diversity of society within their workforce. As I said, I'll leave that one there. We could talk for a whole hour on that separately.

And then the third big bucket that I was thinking about is the legal and regulatory reasons as to why we care about inclusive design and recruitment. So this varies hugely around the world. As Casey said in the intro, I'm based in the UK. Casey's in the States. But if you look at most legislature in countries around the world, many jurisdictions have protective legislation around discrimination. And these vary quite a lot.

And, again, we could do a whole webinar on differences between different jurisdictions in terms of legal protection and regulatory requirements about being inclusive and equitable. But most countries and states do have requirements that need to be met. Some of them are targets, and companies need to employ a certain percentage. Other countries take very different approaches.

The history of that is really quite interesting. And I'm not going to go down that rabbit hole now, or else we'd be here all day. So those are the three general buckets of why I think we need to care about inclusive design in the recruitment process.

So I mentioned just before about most companies and organizations having DE&I strategies. So on the next slide, Casey, I've had a go at cracking out some definitions about what DE&I actually is because it's interesting, actually. Being involved in this community through my work, through the employer representative group at Pearson, talking to other companies invested in this space, different organizations and even different geographies have slightly different definitions of what they mean by DE&I or ED&I, actually, and maybe just D&I. There's lots of different connotations.

So for the purposes of level setting for the next 50 minutes, I thought I'd just trot through what I'm talking about when I'm talking about DE&I during this presentation. Forgive me, by the way, if I'm looking around at different screens. You do have my full attention. But I've got different screens going and different Zoom things going on. So you have got my full attention. If I'm looking around, it's not because I'm ignoring you. It's because I'm looking at different screens.

Anyway, diversity-- so diversity, appreciating the existence of variation of characteristics that make an individual unique. There are hundreds, thousands, almost infinitesimal experiences and things in life that make me different to Casey to everybody else on this call. And the 7 billion people in the world are all different in different ways. That's diversity. We're all diverse. We're all unique. And appreciating these differences is what I mean when I'm talking about diversity.

So inclusion is the next stage on from that. Having recognized diversity, inclusion is about fostering a culture where individuals are welcomed, comfortable, and treated fairly and respectfully. So it's the continuation of diversity but welcoming the diversity within any given situation or organization or setup.

So that's D and I, which leaves E, which is often talked about. DE&I or ED&I can mean two different things, equality or equity. So equality is providing each individual or group of people the same resources or opportunities-- so treating people in the same way to make them feel included and appreciate that diversity. But it's about doing things the same for everyone.

Contrasting with equity, which is recognizing that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resource and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. So that's not doing things in the same way for everyone. It's appreciating that some groups of people, some individuals and groups, need to have things done in a particular way in order for them to participate equitably in society, in whatever aspect of society that we're talking about at any given time. So on the next slide, I'm sure you guys--

CASEY PEARSON: Chris, sorry to interrupt. We actually had a really interesting question from an attendee asking if you're familiar with JEDI, J-E-D-I, and the J standing for Justice.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Absolutely, and totally right. And justice, I think, in my mind, also taps squarely into the equity piece. And it pulls in some of the legislation and things we talked about just now. Absolutely, I have heard of that.

And it's interesting, actually. As I mentioned earlier, speaking to different people from different organizations from different parts of the world with different strategies and different backgrounds and peoples' routes into this space, it's really quite broad in its own right. It's a huge, diverse community. So absolutely. It's a great point. Thank you whoever raised that.

CASEY PEARSON: All right. We'll go on to the next slide.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Thanks. You guys have probably seen this diagram or a variation of it before, equality versus equity. It kind of hammers home the point that not everybody in society needs exactly the same thing as other people.

So from a visual representation, in case anyone can't see what's on the screen, the left-hand picture of three shows three people watching a soccer match. The adults can see over a wooden fence. The child in the middle, who is standing, can't see over the fence. They're blocked by a wooden fence. And the third child in the picture is in a wheelchair. They can't see over the fence either. So the two kids can't see the soccer game.

Second picture depicts the same three people, who have all been provided with wooden boxes. So the adult's standing of the wooden box. They could see over the fence before, but they can see better now. The kid who is standing can just about peer over the top of the wooden fence.

And the kid in the wheelchair has got a wooden box, but they can't use the wooden box. They can't get the wheelchair onto the wooden box, so they still can't see. So that's equality. That's depicting equality.

The third picture shows the adult standing. The middle child, who's standing, is now on two boxes. And they can see quite clearly over the wooden fence. And the child in the wheelchair has got a ramp. And he's wheeled himself up the ramp, and he can watch the soccer match brilliantly.

That denotes equity. So we've taken into account the needs of those three individuals. We haven't given them just the one wooden box, which is equality. But we've actually considered their needs.

So one way that that diagram is depicted often doesn't have the fourth picture, which is on the next slide, which is the addition-- instead of there being a wooden fence obscuring peoples' view, there's now a mesh fence. And that is meant to depict inclusive design.

So if we were thinking about the needs of all of those individuals when the soccer stadium was being created, we would question, well, A, why is there a fence there at all? Let's assume that there is a need to keep people from getting hit by soccer balls. But if there is a need for a fence, why did we build it out of wood?

If we think about the needs of society and the people in wheelchairs-- and it's not all about wheelchairs, by the way. This is just meant to depict it. If we think about the needs of people watching the game, you wouldn't build a wooden fence. You would use inclusive design to think, well, actually, if we went for a slightly different solution, we would be catering for a lot more people in the solution that we come up with. Sorry. I'm sure you guys have seen that before.

I'm going to continue on the really basic sphere at the moment and pivot to, what is disability? We've got a description on the screen, which is the UN Convention of People with Disabilities definition of disability. I'll read it out really quickly-- "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Most legislature around the world-- I know the ADA uses a very close variation of that. The Equality Act in the UK uses a very close variation of that UN definition. And it's fairly common standard practice around the world just to kind of level set again as to what we're talking about when we're talking about disability.

But one thing that's worth bearing in mind is that I sometimes fall foul of this myself. Disability is a huge, big category. And it covers all types of disabilities. And I've listed a few here-- sight loss, being deaf or hard of hearing, a whole range of mental health conditions, intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injuries, autism spectrum disorders, and a whole host of physical disabilities.

It's always dangerous when you start listing out types of disabilities because people are going to come in and say, well, what about this? What about that? This is purely for illustrative purposes to show how broad disability is in its categorization.

CASEY PEARSON: And, Chris, in reference to the images, which I think are a great example, a visual example, Ina asks-- she said she's seen a version of those images where the fence is removed entirely, as in a barrier removal. How is that considered in inclusive design?

CHRIS FAWCETT: Absolutely. And I think it's a great question. And I was deliberate when I was talking about the fourth picture to assume that there's a need for a fence there at all. So we'll talk about this when we get into inclusive design a bit later on. But yeah, thinking about what the problem is you're actually trying to solve might actually lead to the conclusion that you don't need a fence.

I was working on the assumption that it's there for a safety reason, to stop people getting hit by balls. But you're absolutely right. The question is absolutely right. When you start drilling down into the nitty-gritty as to why a solution is coming up, what the solution is and what is the problem you're trying to solve can be tackled in a bunch of different ways. But absolutely, great question, absolutely.

So just continuing on disability-- and every time I do a disability presentation, I always trot out these stats. So 1.3 billion people in the world live with some form of disability. So that's about one in five or one in six. Collective spending power of people with disabilities and their friends and families-- $8 trillion a year.

80% of disabilities are acquired during the working force age of 18 to 64. So people quite often think or assume that people are born with a disability. Most people acquire a disability whilst they're at work or during the working force age. Of all the companies that I was talking about before-- so all employers-- most have DE&I or ED&I or JEDI strategies. But only 4% of businesses make a specific focus on disability as part of that EDI journey in terms of being inclusive.

And just to contrast that against the way and the opportunities that disabled people have, we've still got a long way to go. So if you take the FTSE 100, the stock exchange in the UK, and look at the 100 most profitable companies in the UK, none of the senior managers or executives have declared a disability, which ain't representative of that one in five or one in six that we're talking about at the top. So we've still got a long way to go. And, funnily enough, recruitment is part of that journey, which is what we're actually here to talk about today.

So just level setting across the board again. Finally, on the next slide, Casey, want to bear in mind, too-- and I know everyone knows this already-- but 80% of disabilities are hidden or nonvisible. So you don't know necessarily who you're talking to on any in a given meeting or when you meet someone in the street or you're interviewing them whether they have a disability or not. 20% of disabilities are identifiable. 80% aren't. So just a reminder there.

So moving on, just touching on the medical model of disability versus the social model of disability because I think this also plays into the need for inclusive design in everything that we do, fortunately, the medical model of disability, where the problem of a disability is put upon the individual with a disability, is on the wane in favor of the social model of disability. So it's not the fault of the person with a disability. It shouldn't be up to them to solve the challenges that they face in everything they do in society. That's the medical model.

Fortunately, almost all uniquely around the globe, we're moving towards and adopting the social model of disability, which makes the problem the disabled person's world. And we can all do much more to be inclusive and deliberately inclusive for people with disabilities in the way that we design and do things in society. So just to contrast the medical model versus the social model, because inclusive design is all about the social model, it's living and breathing and bringing to life the social model of disability, thankfully.

And there's some examples on the screen. I shan't run through them now. But thinking about how we can be more inclusive in the recruitment process is where we are today and why we're here. So, again, just this level setting and talking about where we are.

So before we launch into inclusive design as a concept and we start doing a deeper dive into that, in realizing the social model of disability and embracing equity for people with disabilities, it's probably worthwhile, in the next slide, Casey, having a think about what accessibility is and what accessible design is. And there's lots of different definitions out there. It's used interchangeably for different reasons and different purposes. And even in the world of disability, different people have different definitions.

But a couple of points I wanted to pull out here, if I may be so bold-- and I'll read them out. I hate reading things out verbatim from slides. But I can also see the benefit from people that can't see what's on the slides.

So the first point is accessibility is the goal to ensure that products and services support each individual user's needs and preferences. It's a part of disability equity, but it's not the silver bullet in its entirety. Users' needs and preferences are so diverse that there is no perfectly accessible final result.

Coming back to thinking about how broad the term "disability" is and what constitutes a disability under any legal prescription, there isn't one solution that fits everybody altogether. I do a lot of work in my spare time supporting disability equity on the railways. An example of that is-- I don't know if you guys have them in the States, but on rail platforms in the UK, there's the raised paving. And sometimes on pavements and sidewalks, there's raised paving so that people that can't see can identify when they're near a platform edge or near the edge of a road.

Fantastic for people that can't see, like myself. I sometimes use a white cane, and it's really useful. But they present a different barrier for people in wheelchairs. And they create another hassle there. So the point is that there isn't one perfect solution in terms of accessibility.

Disability is an interactive process that requires accepting new information about what users want and need and adapting products and services accordingly over the lifespan of the product. Accessibility isn't a tick-box exercise. It's not, wow, we've done it. We can walk away from it now.

We're always learning. There's always going to be new requirements. There's going to be improvements that need to be made. It's a continuum. It isn't a get in, fix it, and get out. It's a continuum journey.

Accessibility and accessible design-- to the next point, it's quite often based on compliance and meeting government legislation and/or industry guidelines, such as the ADA in the States or the Equality Act in the UK or the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Accessibility is sometimes treated as a kind of tick-box exercise.

But hopefully what we're proving here is that it's absolutely valid, and it's a really important thing to do to consider accessibility. But there's more to it than just meeting the legal requirements of any given solution. It isn't a static thing. It needs to evolve. It needs to move. Accessibility needs to grow.

And the final point is it often focuses on specific adjustments or accommodations to ensure that disabled people have access to products, services, and environments. So yeah, sometimes it goes down the road of adjustments and accommodations. I'm going to throw in here a disclaimer. I'm from the UK. Normal parlance around disability is "disabled people." I know that that can cause offense to some people who prefer people-first language.

We're talking to a global audience here and there isn't a one size fits all. And, again, that's another interesting subject for another webinar. But forgive me if I use terms that people don't like. I'm never going to appease all the audiences in a global environment-- people with disabilities, disabled people. Anyway, so yeah, it often relies on adjustments or accommodations.

So contrasting that with universal design, another term that's used a lot to support the social model of disability and disability equity. So the universal design principles were come up with by a chap by the name of Ronald Mace back in about 1980, I think it was. And he defines universal design as "The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

Sounds great. I love it. It's a really quite hard thing to achieve, though. Coming back to the differences in needs associated with accessibility, hitting that sweet spot where you can come up with something that is accessible for absolutely everyone-- it's almost like the golden ticket. It's something to strive for, but it's something that's really quite difficult to achieve.

Because you're hitting the needs of absolutely everyone in society-- so everyone, the 1.3 billion people with disabilities and the rest of the people in the world without disabilities-- it doesn't need to address individual accessibility needs. Because, basically, it says that you're hitting that sweet spot, and everyone can use it.

Universal design typically results in product features that benefit a variety of unique users, not just those with disabilities. And some examples of those I've listed out on the slide, things like pavement curbs. So dropped pavement curbs for people that use wheelchairs, for example, are great for people that use wheelchairs. But they're also benefiting everyone else that is using that curb, that sidewalk, that pavement-- parents with prams, delivery people wheeling trolleys of stuff.

Automatic doors on buildings-- it's easier to hit the button on the side of a building which opens the door for someone in a wheelchair. It's easier to do that than walking through an automated turnstile that stops every two seconds. So the automatic door is brilliant. Let's have more of those, an example of universal design.

And we're on a Zoom call right now. But if you look at Zoom and Microsoft and Teams, a lot of the functionality that we use everyday nowadays postpandemic in these virtual calls is brought about through universal design and people with disabilities. So the raising of the hand function, the chat functionality is all brought about because of the needs of different types of disability. But everyone uses them all the time.

Even the background I've got behind me, the blanking out of backgrounds and blurring backgrounds and things like that-- accessibility-designed features that are universally used by everyone. Universal design-- love it. It's the sweet spot. But it's hard to achieve.

Let's contrast that with inclusive design. And there isn't one unified definition of inclusive design. But on the slide, I've plucked a definition from the University of Toronto, which I quite like. It says that "Design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age, and other forms of human difference," so reflecting all of the diversity aspects.

But where inclusive design differs from universal design is that inclusive design acknowledges that it's not always possible-- and sometimes it's not appropriate-- for one solution to meet every user's needs. And therefore inclusive design explores the different solutions for different groups of people.

So what universal design does is it guides an appropriate design response to diversity in the population. And it does that through developing a family of products and services to provide the best possible coverage of the population. So trying to come up with solutions and designs that as many people in society can be-- is applicable to as many people in society, but knowing that some people won't be able to use it and coming up with different solutions outside of that.

Inclusive design ensures that individual products and services have clear and distinct target users. So it's knowing who will be able to use that product or service but, almost more importantly, who won't be able to use it and coming up with solutions for those that can't use it on the side. And it reduces the level of ability required to use each product or service in order to improve the user experience for a broad range of customers in a variety of situations.

So the target for inclusive design is still to design for as many people in the world as possible and as many types of disability. But it acknowledges that that sweet spot of universal design isn't always going to be appropriate for a particular solution. And it's OK to think about things slightly differently, coming up with different solutions for certain demographics, as long as you're doing it consciously and you're striving to accommodate as many people as you can in your initial design.

And that's represented on the next slide in a little pyramid model here. And this slide shows that the target for inclusive design is the base of the pyramid. So you're designing for as many different needs as you can. And you're consciously not including and you're using a different product solution for the top of the pyramid, where you've acknowledged that a specialist product or a specialist service might be more appropriate to meet their needs. But you're designing for the majority of the population as you possibly can.

So that's inclusive design in a nutshell. Big tech companies use inclusive design a lot. And on the next slide, I really quite like Microsoft's approach to inclusive design. And they published these three principles. And I think they're quite easy and tangible to get hold of and relate to-- so broken down into three stages, if you like.

The first stage is recognizing exclusion. So that is designing for inclusivity does not only open up their products and services to more people. It also reflects how people really are. All humans grow and adapt to the world around them. And we want our designers to reflect that. So, again, the first stage is understanding diversity. It's understanding how broad it is and making sure that when they're designing stuff they're excluding as few people as they possibly can.

So next stage is solve for one, extend to many. Everyone has abilities and limits to those abilities. Designing for people with permanent disabilities actually results in designs that are of benefit to people universally. Constraints are a beautiful thing.

So we gave examples before about Zoom functionality and Teams functionality. We've spoken about that. So the benefits of building in features for people with disabilities is actually benefiting everyone. That's brilliant.

And the third point is learn from diversity. And it says, "Human beings are the real experts in adaptations to diversity. Inclusive design puts people in the center from the very start of the process, and those fresh, diverse perspectives are the key to true insight." So it's appreciating and actually talking to and learning from people with diverse experiences and diverse needs to actually inform the whole process.

I really quite like Microsoft's definition. I hope they don't mind that I borrowed it for today's presentation. But I think it's a useful concept. So we're here to talk about inclusive design and the recruitment process. Casey, just before I launch into this, is there anything in the chat? This is a useful jumping-off point.

CASEY PEARSON: Yes, thank you. We have a lot of interesting comments and observations. John comments, your definition of inclusive design seems to legitimize exclusion of those who do not conform to whatever norms are being designed to, but separate is still not equal. What's your thoughts on that, Chris?

CHRIS FAWCETT: Forgive me, John, if I've given the wrong impression there. I certainly didn't mean to. The way I would answer that is that inclusive design-- if we think about the needs of people with disabilities or people with diverse needs. And those needs are going to be hugely diverse.

So I'm registered as severely sight impaired. I can see sufficiently to get by by using some software on my screen. I don't read braille. I can navigate sufficiently. And my experience as being registered as blind, because I am, is going to be different who uses a care dog and can't see anything at all and does read braille. Meeting the needs of me and someone who uses braille in the same solution is going to be really quite difficult.

And if we take that as just one example-- and it's the one that I can relate to most because it's my lived experience-- designing something that accommodates as many people as you possibly can, even across the blind spectrum, is going to be more beneficial.

But doing so in the knowledge that someone who is, I don't know, maybe a native braille reader is not going to be included within a solution, knowing that they're not going to be included and coming up with a solution separate for them, a specialist solution, as long as you know about it and you're not excluding them within the design process, you're actually thinking about something different. And creating an alternative product or an alternative route into the process is, I think, one of the fundamental principles of the thinking. I don't know if that answers your question, John. I hope it does.

CASEY PEARSON: Wonderful. Another attendee commented and provided some background information, saying, there are two levels of universal design. And one is user-aware design, meaning pushing the boundaries of mainstream products, services, and environments to include as many people as possible.

And then there's also customizable design, so designing to minimize the difficulties of adaptation to particular users. And they comment, doesn't the second level mean providing options to fill in the gaps to individual needs? And in this way, the concept seems to be the same as inclusive design.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Absolutely. I don't disagree with that. And they are two different approaches. And, yeah, again, conscious of time, we could probably have a whole separate session-- I'm listing out a bunch of sessions for you guys. I hope you don't mind. But in terms of the specifics and the operation of different models in different ways through inclusive design and universal design and accessibility and inclusive design, we could probably spend a lot more time drilling down into that.

But no, I completely agree with the questioner, that they are two different approaches. Both are useful. And both should be deployed, I would suggest, when considering designing solutions for anything, be it a product or a service or an environment or a policy. I would agree with that point.

CASEY PEARSON: Wonderful.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Awesome. So jumping forward slightly, we're here to talk about the recruitment process. A lot of what I'm going to be talking about now is through my own lived experience. And it's also through speaking to other colleagues and friends and acquaintances with disabilities and some of the barriers that we've faced as individuals in recruitment processes in organizations.

So thinking about the needs of as broad a spectrum of people as possible, the next few slides take us through the stages of a recruitment process. And I know that the recruitment processes that organizations use can differ hugely. So what I've tried to do here is take a fairly straightforward approach through advertising, applying, selecting, and then offering.

So I'll fess up upfront that there's different ways of doing these things. But I've taken the more traditional routes through this and thinking about the needs of people with disabilities and the inclusive design approach in, hopefully, what are useful tips for organizations to consider, if they're not doing so already, to be inclusive and actually live up to those DE&I pledges that companies make through environmental sustainability goals and other pledges that companies have, going back to what we were talking about a few minutes ago.

So if we think about advertising jobs and job descriptions, the content of a job advert needs to be inclusive in terms of its language use. So this applies not just in the disability sphere. It applies in lots of areas of diversity.

But considering the language that one uses, don't make it too complex. Don't make it over simple, but be concise. Write in nonprejudicial ways. Don't make it a masculine set of language, that type of thing.

And there's a host of-- again, we could drill down into this in a lot more detail. And there's a host of good information and resource out there that can help individuals do this. But just a little tip-- don't exclude people because of the language in your writing. Be deliberately inclusive in the way that you're actually writing adverts and job descriptions.

Omit stock criteria that are not relevant to a role. Quite often, I look at jobs, and it requires a driving license or for me to have a certain qualification level, where if you actually drill down into it and look behind the scenes, these things aren't necessarily related to the role itself. They're kind of nice-to-haves. But they're not really gauging the individual's aptitude for the role that's being advertised. And it applies to disability.

I see lots of jobs in the UK that require driving licenses. I'm registered as blind. I don't have a driving license. I've never had one. Can I get to a site in a different way using public transport? Yeah, I can. Why do you require me to have a driving license? So just think about what it is that you're actually prescribing in there. And is it actually required?

The job advert itself needs to be accessible. I've seen job adverts-- as I mentioned before, I think I mentioned I use Zoom tech software and also access to JAWS. Lots of adverts that I see advertised by companies aren't accessible. I can't interact with them using JAWS. They don't read. So considering WCAG compliance in the construction of the job adverts and the job description is important.

And related to that, where the job advert or job description is hosted-- tends to be on a company's website normally. But it might be on a third-party board. How accessible is that? Can someone, for example, that's using a screen reader or needs to use the other facets of the WCAG criteria-- can they actually interact with that site is important to consider.

Consideration of where adverts are placed in order to attract diverse talents-- there's an increasing number of diversity job boards in the market at the moment. And perhaps consider using those if you are truly invested in diversifying your talent pool.

Promoting employer diversity benchmarks-- so things like disability confidence DEI scores. Showing the company's commitment to disability, equity, and, in fact, broader diversity through the initiatives and benchmarking tools an organization might be involved in is a good selling point.

This is an important one, actually. Provide a named contact with whom a prospective candidate may liaise in respect to any reasonable adjustments slash accommodations for the application process itself. Yeah, if someone can't interact with a website or a job board or can't read the documents that are on it, giving someone a named contact upfront saves that individual-- assuming they're still interested and they want to work for that company, it saves them having to go off into the ether and find a name, someone that they can speak to, and get bounced around five different departments. So being upfront, it shows commitment from the company's perspective that they're considering disability, equity, and inclusivity if you give a named contact as part of the advertising process.

And also, yeah, make it clear as to what the application process would involve. I've been through a number of different types of recruitment process. Some are fairly standard curriculum vitaes, CVs, or resumes. Some are fairly structured application forms, might involve assessment centers.

But letting people know upfront will enable the candidates to actually think, OK, this is what the process is going to involve. This is what I need to plan for and what my accommodations might be as I enter into it. Doing that right upfront at the point that you're advertising for a job is considering and it's showing, it's demonstrating that you've used inclusive design within your process.

So that's a few points on the advertising and job descriptions. So moving on from the advertising and JD process to the application process itself, make provision for alternative forms of application as reasonable adjustments where appropriate. So think about what that thing is that you're asking someone to do when they're actually applying. Is it fair? Is it inclusive?

Is it inequitable to make them write 5,000 words in different sections of a particular type of form or two sides of A4 or whatever the thing is you're actually asking them to do? What are the barriers within that? What happens if someone's got some issue with that, for an example? And what would be a valid alternative to asking them to jump through that hoop because it's part of your process? Would you consider things like a video application, for example, just as two examples?

So what are the barriers in the process that a company is actually using as its bog standard bread and butter? Thinking about that upfront-- I'm not providing the solutions here because I know different companies do things in different ways. But give some thought to that as part of inclusive design in the recruitment process.

Again, I've mentioned it before, but it's a slightly different context. Provide a named contact with whom a prospective candidate may liaise with respect to reasonable adjustments for the application process itself. So as well as not being able to access the job description or the adverts, what happens if someone has got some issue or requires an accommodation or an adjustment to the process itself? Again, give the named contact upfront. Happy days, you've ticked two boxes there.

Consider what you actually want to assess at each stage of the process and that you're not assessing these and exclude any aspects that might lead to microaggressions and/or biases through unintended assessment constructs. And you see this in some companies. Some companies do anonymize CVs and cover letters and application forms-- so removing names and gender.

Removing any disability information is not necessarily straightforward. When I'm filling in a job application form, I sometimes use my lived experience of disability as demonstration of grit and having to do things differently and overcoming challenges. So disability is an interesting one in terms of anonymizing and stripping back, in an essence, to avoid microaggressions and any potential bias it might cause. It's an interesting, thorny one, and it's probably subject of another debate.

But consider things like removing applicant names and gender and which school they went to, which university they went to. Is it actually relevant? Are you introducing potential bias in there? Are you potentially opening up the process to microaggressions? Yeah, quite possibly. Disabilities are difficult once it's happened to you, particularly if the application itself is based on disability.

Ensure that all stages of the application process are digitally accessible. Probably does what it says on the tin, right? But yeah, if you're using Zoom or Teams or you're asking them to do a written exercise or an assessment center or something, make sure whatever you're doing has considered digital accessibility needs if you're asking them to do anything in the digital sphere. Kind of does what it says on the tin.

And consider whether or not to formally ask if a candidate wishes to declare a disability as part of the application process. And this is linked to offering interviews to disabled candidates that meet the threshold for minimum criteria for a role.

So for example, in the UK, there's a government-managed scheme called Disability Confident. And companies that meet the level 2 certification of the government Disability Confident scheme need to offer guaranteed interviews to applicants that meet the minimum requirements for any particular role. It's an interesting one, actually, to consider. But in doing so, you're actually asking people to declare, if they wish to, the fact that they have a disability at that stage.

So at the application stage, there are pros and cons. And, again, we can talk about this until-- well, probably for the next hour or two-- about the pros and cons of it. But give it some serious consideration as part of the inclusive design aspects of your process as to whether that's a good thing or a bad thing. There are pros and cons. There are strengths and weaknesses to that particular aspect.

CASEY PEARSON: You know, Chris, off the top of your head, can you elaborate on maybe some initial pros and cons as to why you would not or want to ask that on an application?

CHRIS FAWCETT: Yeah. A lot of it, I think, comes back down to legalities and how data is treated with any-- what are you allowed to ask legally varies all the way around the world. And it probably varies from state to state, as far as I understand, in the US as well. So yeah, for some geographies, it might be fine to ask.

But asking someone to declare a disability at the application stage, before they've got their foot in the door, before they've actually been interviewed, is a big, bold move. I came out of the closet with my disability. I was almost forced out a few years ago, as I said in my intro. I'm fairly open and proud to be a disabled person.

That isn't the case for a lot of people, bearing in mind that 80% of disabilities are hidden. And if you look at the disability employment stats and disparity in disability employment data and disability pay gap data, there's a whole host of reasons why people don't wish to declare a disability at the application stage or even when they're in a company.

And it comes down to a lot. It's an individual choice, basically. But there are potentially pros of asking for that data. Again, it comes back to company strategies and metrics and what the company's ethos is around data. Some companies might like it to show and improve where they're advertising roles if they're not getting many disabled applicants through. But it's a bold move for a lot of people to actually disclose at that stage.

CASEY PEARSON: And I think you're right. We could go on for a long time discussing this. I'll mention we had a wonderful fireside chat with Judy Heumann the other week. And we did talk a lot about self-identification and disclosing disabilities in the workplace. So for anyone interested in exploring that topic more, I definitely recommend checking out that webinar.

Before we move on, we did have an attendee point out a good recommendation about the named contact during the application process should be someone outside of the interview process because people might be concerned about disclosure and discrimination.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Absolutely. I completely agree with that. And being upfront as well, as well as giving a named contact, some sideline associated with it as to why the named contact is given. And they're not part of the process. And the data won't be collected, assuming it won't be, and some reassurance for the candidate who wishes to contact that person that the purpose for contacting them is that and nothing else. So being quite clear, I think, is important, too. Absolutely.

CASEY PEARSON: Wonderful.

CHRIS FAWCETT: So moving on to the selection process-- interviews and assessment centers and written exercises and tasks and all that kind of good stuff. So when choosing your assessment methods, consider the validity of any given assessment method to ensure that you're actually testing for the skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors the role requires. And you're avoiding any unintended constructs.

So, again, it kind of comes back to that example I gave a little while ago about, why are you asking for a driving license when you don't have to drive and can do things in a different way? Are you asking questions in an interview that are actually relevant to the role? Or are they just nice questions to ask because you've always asked that type of question in that particular way?

Are you assessing someone's typing speed if you give them 10 minutes to do a written exercise? Typing speed can be an unintended construct of an assessment in an interview process or a selection process. So consider what those things are that could be barriers to someone with a type of disability-- any type of disability-- in completing a task or answering something in a particular way. And you're judging them on something that is actually a barrier that you've introduced.

If the job is typing, well, yeah, it comes down to the definition of what's a reasonable adjustment and what isn't. It might be OK to actually assess someone's typing speed if they're typing. But then again, you can introduce, what about if there's automated software for it?

So, again, we can go down a whole different road. But be deliberate and be conscious and be cognizant of barriers that you could introduce in the construct of the assessment that you're actually rocking at any particular point in time in any process. Keep language and context simple if, indeed, it's appropriate to keep language simple, unless you're actually deliberately trying to assess someone's ability to deal with language. Again, we could down a rabbit hole on that one.

It's important to accommodate any reasonable adjustments or accommodations that have been requested before the interview. So anyone that your named contact has been contacted by, ensure that the needs are being met in the interview process or the selection process. It's the next stage on from asking [INAUDIBLE] named contact.

And also, digitally, if you're using any exercises, ensure that those are as accessible as they possibly can be, particularly if they're digital. But it applies to everything that we do. I'm conscious of time, Casey. We're nearly at the end of this one.

And so you've made your selection. You've been as equitable as you possibly can be. You've thought about inclusiveness all the way through. And you're making an offer to a candidate.

It's often good at the time but separate from the process of making an offer to a candidate, to ask them if they have any reasonable adjustments or accommodations in advance before they actually start the role that you're offering them. It gives you time to actually build those in.

Bear in mind as well accommodations and reasonable adjustments aren't just digital. It's not just providing software. It could be travel. It could be different working patterns. It could be different working hours. But getting those in, not linked to the offer, but at about the same time as the offer, maybe just after they've accepted the offer but around that same time, gives you plenty of time to think about how you can accommodate those needs.

It's also worth mentioning that not everyone with a disability knows what those accommodations and reasonable adjustments are that they need. I acquired my disability. Mine went downhill, as I said, five or six years ago. I had no idea what I needed in order to do my job equitably. I had to go through a bunch of assessments to work out what was best for me.

So be cognizant of the fact that not everyone knows what those are. And be prepared to offer them an assessment to find out what their needs actually are to do their job equitably once they're in place.

Ensure accommodations are put in place by the start date. We've covered that. And provide details of any staff networks, ERGs, and other aspects of diversity, ESGs, all that kind of stuff. Provide that information upfront around the time you're making the offer, if you haven't done so already, so that they can hit the ground running once they actually start with you having accepted the offer that you've made.

And then, finally, talking about what's your best source for inclusive design thinking? This is not an exhaustive list. But you've got a ready-made bunch of people that can actually support you in this already.

Best source of information is your staff. Listen to your staff. Ask them, particularly disabled ones, if you have them. Where are the barriers? What's going on? What can be made better? Staff networks-- if you've got a disability ERG or an affinity group, talk to them. They'll tell you where your barriers are and how improvements can be made.

Survey your staff. Most companies survey their staff anyway. Make it anonymous. Get some honest and frank feedback on blockers to recruitment processes.

Other companies-- Pearson is a member of Disability:IN and the Business Disability Forum of hundreds of companies invested in making things more equitable for disability. You needn't reinvent the wheel. Listen to other companies and what they're doing in this space.

A whole host of nonprofits are out there, willing to help, I'm sure, in informing your inclusive design thinking, particularly around recruitment but not just recruitment. And disability organizations, DOBEs, fantastic sources of information. Again, that list isn't exhaustive.

Just to round out, I think we mentioned in the advert for this session that we would think about how this inclusive design thinking can be used outside of recruitment. I know we're at the top of the hour. But, basically, it's not just about products and services or buildings or physical environments.

Hopefully, we've shown that you can make your recruitment process more equitable and inclusive by thinking about the needs of different people at each stage of the process. Don't stop at recruitment. It can apply to any policy that your company has, literally any policy that your company has, any process that operates internally or externally.

We've mentioned self-disclosure, accessibility strategies both for the workforce and outside. These can all benefit from inclusive design thinking, all the way through working patterns. The list goes on. But basically anything can have inclusive design applied to it. Please take it broader than just the topic of what we've been talking about for the last hour. Casey, we've gone over a couple of minutes. I'm really sorry.

CASEY PEARSON: That's OK. It was a fabulous presentation. And I would like to thank all the attendees for your wonderful and engaging questions and comments. And thank you, Chris, again for a great presentation today.

CHRIS FAWCETT: Thank you very much, and thanks, all, for listening.