

## Inclusive recruitment in a post-pandemic world



Our post-webinar response to your questions

 Capita

The Coronavirus pandemic has shifted the way that organisations attract, assess and onboard talent. To succeed, they have had to quickly move to virtual hiring processes, implement new technologies and adapt their current processes and tools.

This virtual session explored how the remote working landscape can potentially breaking down barriers for some disadvantaged groups. The panel discussed how the shift in how we hire has created an unprecedented opportunity to evolve organisational systems and processes to be more innovative, productive, inclusive and equitable.

## Questions from audience and responses

### 1. Assessment and reasonable adjustments

- i. “For our volume recruitment early careers campaigns, we currently have a video interview process prior to virtual recruitment days... I’m looking at alternatives to video interviews as I’ve had mixed feedback and I know that they can be a barrier for certain groups. Do you have any suggestions on what other good solutions are inclusive but support the reduction of bulk volumes?”*

**Response:** This is interesting as our evaluations, including statistical analyses of video interviews, have found positive outcomes in terms of diversity. However, video interviews do require careful preparation, testing and training. If you’re looking for an alternative, simple telephone interviews can be an inexpensive way of assessing comparable areas without the need for a sophisticated technology platform.

Other options would depend on the role requirements and the knowledge, skills and behaviours that you want to measure. Possibilities include psychometric assessments, behavioural assessments (such as situational judgement tests) and blended solutions. There are off-the-shelf solutions on the market or, for some roles, a more bespoke solution is the answer.

Our assessment and development team can help you to explore the options.

- ii. “We’re providing additional support for candidates who need an adjustment due to a disability, and we’re asking recruiting managers to type interview questions in the Teams chat bar if this will help a candidate. We’re getting some queries now about candidates wanting to receive interview questions over email 45 mins before their interview. We’re nervous about circulating our interview questions and are interested in your thoughts.”*

**Response:** We would encourage all organisations to do everything possible to make the process accessible for all candidates. For our own recruitment, and when we help clients to deliver theirs, it’s not uncommon for us to share interview questions with candidates before an actual interview, for those who need it.

The risk, of course, is that candidates will share the interview questions with other prospective candidates. We mitigate against this by taking steps booking these candidates in towards the end of a campaign. We also ask candidates to agree not to share the questions – which, if they are asked to put their agreement in writing or in an email, can be surprisingly effective.

With other assessments, we design and use parallel versions of assessments, which differ in content but assess the same constructs

## 2. Additional support

- i. “As part of the shift to virtual, what other provisions have you made to level the playing field?”*

**Response:** The shift to virtual recruitment has made us rethink our candidate and assessor communications, assessor training and assessment guidance. Trailing of solutions is also important.

Examples include quick show-and-tell video guides, building in practice content for candidates and allowing assessors to become familiar with the technology before using it. In many instances, as part of planning we also build in the opportunity for candidates to log onto any system before an actual live assessment so they can familiarise themselves with what they will need to do, ask questions and reduce any anxieties.

As part of our workplace accessibility schemes, we also offer some candidates coaching sessions.

## 3. Access to assessments and skills

- i. “Are any of the panellists experiencing challenges with the move to online assessment activities disadvantaging certain social economic groups who may not have access to the necessary IT equipment to effectively engage?”*

**Response:** Shifting from face-to-face to virtual delivery using technology can present challenges in terms of access for some candidates.

Interestingly, we have found a lot of benefits for candidates from lower socio-economic groups. Virtual recruitment has led to the removal of barriers such as up-front travel costs, new clothing and so on. Many of these candidates may not have access to a computer but often do have access to a mobile phone, and they use it to take part in the process. Post-pandemic, we'll be able to offer additional support by enabling pre-arranged access to sites where computers are available.

Another surprise in relation to candidate access has been workplace accessibility programmes. Many neurodiversity programmes, for instance, have been put on hold during the pandemic. Organisations that pivoted to virtual delivery have had feedback from some candidates that working in this way has, in fact, been less anxiety-inducing and has helped them to manage their mental wellbeing.

During the session, one of the panel members spoke in detail about the Army Disengaged project, which seeks to reach out to young people from lower socio-economic groups and help them to access work opportunities.

- ii. “How do young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) get help to start a career? What's the typical view of employers of NEET applicants?”*

There are lots of established schemes that Capita, the Civil Service and the Army deliver to enable those currently not in education, employment or training to build the skills they need to start a career. Apprenticeships are a good example, and there are certainly a multitude of these available via the Civil Service website. Additionally, traineeships are an excellent way for young people to enter the labour market. Our education business, Entrust, delivers a scheme targeted specifically at the NEET audience and has some amazing success stories.

The key to all these programmes' success is ensuring that impartial careers advice and guidance takes place to identify the young person's career aspirations, any barriers to engaging and their previous achievements. This guidance can then identify the most appropriate programme content and mode of study. Employers are approached to support the young person based on their career aspirations and we've found that, with support, they're more than willing to offer work experience opportunities.

Our Vision2Learn business provides upskilling qualifications for those wishing to train or retrain for a new career, and for people who have lost their jobs or need to quickly flex their skills as a result of the pandemic.

Capita is providing opportunities for young people through the DWP Kickstart scheme and we're currently recruiting for our fifth cohort of Kickstarters. The scheme is proving to be highly successful and is having some really positive outcomes for the young people we're working with.

## 4. Access to assessments and skills

**ThirtyThree**, our employer branding and marketing agency, answered the following questions.

### *i. "How can we attract more diverse applicants?"*

**Response:** Diversity is twofold from our perspective – the first is a visual representation in your marketing and communications: "Can I see someone like me working there or am I looking at a website full of white men in suits?" We spend huge amounts of time and effort in ensuring that candidates from all walks of life can see themselves reflected in marketing that organisations distribute.

What that doesn't solve is changing the perceptions of those people or groups who may have written an organisation or industry off and therefore won't ever be looking at their marketing. In these cases, we would consider a more direct approach targeting media, locations or groups, depending on what's appropriate and available.

Another example is work we're doing to develop a diversity portal showcase for one of our clients, to help it to promote its business to underrepresented groups.

### *ii. "How can organisations stay attractive as an employer post-pandemic?"*

Thinking about attraction post-pandemic is interesting and a lot of organisations are looking at their communications, employee value propositions and what they're saying to candidates. We're seeing a lot of reworked messages around how companies handled the pandemic and what their future set-up will be.

There are some big organisations betting on "it will all go back to normal – come and join us" and others celebrating "we've changed for the long term – come and join us". This is interesting but, whatever your views, it's important to show your stance.