

LEVELLING THE PLAYINGFIELD:

KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS, RECRUITMENT & SELF-ADVOCACY

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THE SYSTEM IS NOT BROKEN, IT IS RIGGED

- **Recruitment rewards privilege and polish, not resilience** – candidates with networks, money, stable housing and traditional pathways sail through, while those without them are screened out long before interview.
- **Marginalised candidates start behind before the process even begins** – no contacts, no references, no quiet space, no tailored guidance, and often no way to meet the hidden expectations employers take for granted.
- **The goal is to rebuild fairness from the ground up** – not to fix individuals, but to redesign the systems, assumptions and hiring practices that hold them back.

SELF ADVOCACY – SPEAKING UP FOR YOURSELF

- **Own your story; it is your strength** – the experiences you carry are evidence of resilience, not reasons to doubt yourself.
- **Ask for clarity, not charity** - you deserve transparent information, fair expectations and straight answers.
- **Your experience is not a deficit** – what you have lived through builds perspective, adaptability and grit that workplaces rely on.

THE BASICS THE VERY CANDIDATE SHOULD EXPECT

- **You should not have to relive trauma to justify adjustments** – support needs should be met without requiring you to revisit painful experiences just to access fairness.
- **You should not explain gaps created by systemic barriers** – time lost to homelessness, care, illness, prison or instability should not be treated as a personal failing you must defend.
- **Inclusion should be a foundation, not a favour** – accessible, fair recruitment is a basic standard every employer should meet without you having to fight for it.

REAL LIVES, REAL BARRIERS

- **No social capital** – no family network or contacts to support getting into work.
- **Limited work experience** – fewer chances to build a CV or practise interviews.
- **High rents** – unstable or unsafe housing that makes job searching harder.
- **No money for travel or interview clothing** – basic costs stop progress before it starts.
- **DBS checks** – entire sectors become inaccessible.
- **Disclosure of convictions** – forced to relive the worst moment of their life on every application.
- **CV gaps** – time lost to the system is treated as a warning sign.
- **Restricted career options** – some jobs are closed to them altogether.
- **Probation appointments** – mandatory meetings clash with interviews or shifts.
- **Shame and stigma** – fear of being judged for a past they have already rebuilt from.

RED FLAGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- **Vague job details including salary** – unclear expectations, missing information or shifting processes.
- **Inclusion statements with no evidence** – diversity rhetoric without action or resources.
- **Overemphasis on “culture fit”** – code for hiring people who look, sound and think alike.
- **Minimising or dismissing adjustments** – reluctance to accommodate access needs.
- **Blurred boundaries** – terms like “we are a family” paired with low pay or high demands.
- **Coded language** – comments about “energy,” “personality,” or “fit” used to exclude.
- **Panels lacking diversity** – no lived experience, no representation and no accountability.
- **No clear progression or support** – nothing that shows long-term investment in people.

GREEN/RADICAL FLAGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- **Adjustments offered proactively** – interviewers explain options before you have to ask.
- **Real commitment to removing barriers** – systems made accessible by design, not treated as exceptions.
- **Lived experience recognised as expertise** – resilience and insight valued alongside qualifications
- **Managers who listen without judgement** – you can speak openly without being interrupted or dismissed.
- **A predictable, accountable process** – clear timelines, clear decisions, no surprises.
- **Honest conversations about flexibility and workload** – transparency about what the job really requires.
- **Job descriptions based on real tasks** – focused on what you will actually do, not a wish list.
- **Diverse interview panels** – identity, background and perspective meaningfully represented.
- **Space to ask questions and challenge assumptions** – power shared, not controlled.
- **Inclusion evidenced, not advertised** – practices you can see, not slogans you are asked to trust.
- **Progression explained from the start** – clarity on development, training and advancement.
- **A culture that welcomes authenticity** – you can be yourself without pressure to fit a mould.

POWER MOVES TO CONSIDER

- **Audit your strengths** – name what you bring so employers cannot overlook it.
- **Define your non-negotiables** – decide what you will not compromise on before you enter the room.
- **Build your ally network** – mentors, peers and advocates make the journey less isolating.
- **Review the recruitment process** – challenge steps that feel unclear, unfair or inaccessible.
- **Value lived experience as leadership capital** – resilience and insight are assets, not extras.

THE REVOLUTION MUTUAL

- **Inclusion is good business** – diverse teams perform better, innovate faster and retain talent.
- **Equity benefits everyone** – fairness strengthens culture, productivity and trust.
- **Removing barriers expands the talent pool** – employers gain people they would otherwise miss.

CALL TO ACTION

Speak it – name your value with confidence.

Own it – stand firm in your worth.

Protect it – set boundaries that keep you safe and respected.

Recruit it – choose employers who show they deserve you.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- **Self-advocacy strategies** – tools to speak up without selling yourself short.
- **Where advocacy should not be needed** – unfair systems, not personal failings.
- **Lessons from care and justice backgrounds** – real barriers and real resilience.
- **Tools for confidence and planning** – practical steps to move forward with clarity.
- **Inclusion strengthens candidates and employers** – everyone benefits when systems are fair.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DISABLED AND NEURODIVERGENT CANDIDATES

- **The Equality Act applies to applicants** – rights start before the job offer.
- **Employers must remove or reduce disadvantage** – not optional, a legal duty.
- **Adjustments are required at all recruitment stages** – from application to interview to assessment.
- **Section 60 limits pre-employment health questions** – employers must not ask unless it enables adjustments.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT AND THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

- **Applies to job applicants as well as employees** – your rights start the moment you apply, not after you are hired.
- **Employers must make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce disadvantage** – this can be obvious (extra time at interview, wheelchair access) or less obvious (sending questions in advance, offering a quiet space, adjusting sensory load, flexible scheduling, allowing video instead of in-person).
- **The duty covers all stages of recruitment** – applications, interviews, assessments and onboarding must all be accessible.
- **Section 60 limits pre-employment health questions** – employers cannot ask about health or disability unless it is needed to arrange adjustments.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DISABLE AND NEURODIVERGENT CANDIDATE

- **The duty covers all stages of recruitment** – employers must ensure the entire journey is accessible, from the application form to assessments, interviews, onboarding and the first day in role. Accessibility is not a favour; it is a legal requirement.
- **Section 60 restricts pre-employment health questions** – employers cannot ask about a person's health or disability before offering a job, unless they need the information to set up adjustments. This protects candidates from discrimination during early screening.
- **The Equality Act applies to job applicants as well as employees** – legal protection begins the moment someone submits an application, meaning candidates have rights even before they attend an interview or receive an offer.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

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