



Employer support for recruiting disadvantaged individuals

The following list provides information and links to a wide range of support services and programmes available in Northern Ireland to assist employers access disadvantaged individuals who wish to enter/re-enter the workforce. This may include people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, young people, carers, women returning to work, and those aged 50+, people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and minority ethnic communities.

The list is not exhaustive and additional programmes and services may be available beyond those listed below.

TAILORED RECRUITMENT SERVICE

The DfC Employer Services Branch operates a tailored recruitment service across Northern Ireland. This includes:

- **Support for large and public sector employers:** Dedicated Client Executives who will act as a single point of contact and will work with partner organisations to deliver a tailored package of support. Contact: [Employer Services Branch](#).
- **Support for small, medium or micro sized employers:** DfC's network of [Jobs & Benefits offices](#) throughout Northern Ireland offers a range of no cost services which are tailored to help employers find suitable employees. Contact for [Employer Advisers](#) in each of the JBO offices.

Free services for employers include:

- Participation at Job Fairs, Meet the Employer and Tailored Recruitment Events
- Job vacancy advertising on [JobApplyNI.com](#)
- Signposting to a range of programmes to support new or existing staff
- Use of facilities throughout the 35 Jobs & Benefits office network

PROGRAMMES

The Jobstart Scheme

The JobStart Scheme provides funding from the Department for Communities to allow employers to create new job opportunities to help those who are currently unemployed or economically inactive, in receipt of working age benefits and wish to enter or re-enter the workplace. It does this by providing funded wage support of 25 hours of work per week, for up to 6 months, or 9 months for reduced hours, where flexibility is required (if approved by a Work Coach).

Find out more: [JobStart Scheme - employer guidance](#) and [Apply for JobStart Scheme funding](#)

Work Experience Programme

The Work Experience Programme (WEP) offers short term work experience placements for participants aged 16-65 to gain practical knowledge of a working environment. The aim of the programme is to enable participants to develop a range of both employability and occupational skills that can help them with their career aspirations. Participants can learn more about specific industries and job roles to help them make more informed choices about their future career.

Find out more - [Work Experience Programme](#)

Disability Employment Support

DfC supports people with health conditions and disabilities through a range of programmes to assist this group obtain and retain suitable employment.

Through the network of Work Coaches and the Work Psychology Services, a comprehensive information and assessment service is provided which can advise on the following:

- recruiting disabled people
- retaining employees who become disabled
- financial help to employ people with disabilities through the Job Introduction Scheme, Access to Work (NI) and Workable (NI)
- job / employee assessment and job / environment redesign
- equipment and ergonomics in the workplace
- accessibility of premises
- development of disability awareness
- development of good employment practices

[Find out more](#)

LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIPS (LMP)

The Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) initiative is a province wide approach developed by the Department for Communities which will see targeted employment action plans created in every council area to support people towards and into work. The LMP focuses on improving labour market conditions and aims to address issues with jobs and training by combining resources and delivering a collaborative and flexible approach to employability support.

For further information contact [Labour Market Partnerships](#), or alternatively, you can find out more about the local LMP in your area from links below:

- [Antrim & Newtownabbey](#)
- [Ards & North Down](#)
- [Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon](#)
- [Belfast](#)
- [Causeway, Coast & Glens](#)
- [Londonderry/Derry & Strabane](#)
- [Fermanagh & Omagh](#)
- [Lisburn & Castlereagh](#)
- [Mid & East Antrim](#)
- [Mid Ulster](#)
- [Newry, Mourne & Down](#)

INITIATIVES SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Employment support services for people with disabilities

There are a range of disability employment organisations providing employability programmes for all areas of disability (i.e. physical, mental health, learning, sensory and hidden disabilities) across Northern Ireland.

For information on services in your area contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment: info@niuse.org.uk or view the [Employment Support Services for People with Disabilities](#)

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Employability Projects

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund, part of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda, funds a range of employability and social inclusion projects in NI. These projects focus on supporting disadvantaged individuals learn new skills and gain qualifications, as well as gaining employability skills and finding employment.

For details of projects: [UKSP Fund 2025-2026: NI project information](#)

OPENING DOORS CAMPAIGN

Opening Doors is an inclusive recruitment campaign from Business in the Community (BITC). Open to all employers, and free to join, it has the ambition to make 2 million jobs more accessible to diverse talent by supporting employers to make changes to the way they recruit.

The campaign is designed to support employers of all sizes and sectors in Northern Ireland to implement and improve their inclusive employment practices. It aims to change business behaviours and provide a comprehensive support programme for organisations committed to 'opening the doors on all floors' in companies. The underrepresented groups that will be supported include multigenerational talent, people from ethnically-diverse backgrounds, refugees, people with convictions, disabled people, and people who are neurodivergent.

Find out more: [Opening Doors - Business in the Community](#)



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