

## Making recruitment inclusive

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Jen Lobley has been with Acas since 2014. Having previously worked on the helpline and individual conciliation, she now draws on that experience as a trainer and adviser specialising in diversity and inclusion.

Early last year, I was asked to speak at an event in the Midlands on autism in employment. The attendees and other speakers were from a variety of backgrounds – from employers to employees, jobseekers to university researchers, medical experts to stakeholder organisations – so when the organisers and I agreed on the topic of recruitment, I knew I wanted to present something that was not only engaging, but also made the delegates look at recruitment in a different way.

My starting point was the [Acas research paper on neurodiversity at work](#). It gave me things to look for that could either put off someone on the autistic spectrum from applying for a job, or make applying or succeeding, much more difficult for them. Many of these things might otherwise have seemed relatively harmless, such as vague or ambiguous language in adverts, hypothetical scenarios that bore no resemblance to the role, psychometric testing, loud or distracting settings for interview, or even requiring someone to self-identify as 'having a disability' in order to request adjustments to the process.

I then looked for Midlands job adverts that included these pitfalls to use as examples in my session and was so surprised by how common they were (even in adverts by one of the sponsors of the event). I found it eye-opening how many companies are still falling into traps that exclude certain groups.

I think it's very easy for employers to unintentionally fall into relying on language or requirements that aren't inclusive in recruitment, because:

- that's the language someone is used to using
- that's what the policy says

- that's the way we've always done it

More often than not, the root cause is that someone just hasn't stopped to consider how this might come across to or impact on someone whose needs are different to their own – something that I would guess most of us are at least occasionally guilty of.