



Case Study: Business Disability Forum (BDF) conducts whole-systems review for Tideway

Tideway commissioned Business Disability Forum (BDF) to conduct a ‘whole-systems’ review of the organisation’s disability strategy. To do this, BDF analysed Tideway’s performance against each of the ten areas of BDF’s Disability Standard.

The Disability Standard helps organisations measure and improve performance for employees, disabled customers/service users and stakeholders. It covers the following key business areas:

Commitment	Products and Services
Know-how	Suppliers and Partners
Adjustments	Communication
Recruitment	Premises
Retention	ICT

Background

This work was prompted by Tideway’s ‘Ability Action Group’ (AAG), which was established as part of Tideway’s Encompass agenda. AAG who wanted to review the organisation’s current overall approach to recruiting and retaining disabled employees. Tideway asked BDF to design a project to help it better understand how disability impacts on each area of the organisation, to identify where improvements can be made and to inform the content of a disability action plan.

Methodology

BDF used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to ensure a thorough understanding of Tideway and its work and how this might impact on disabled people. BDF also undertook a thorough review of disability-related policy and guidance in order to assess the level of information available to all employees. Furthermore, through interviewing employees with disabilities, BDF was able to build a detailed understanding of the lived experience of Tideway's disabled employees.

Whole organisational analysis – The Disability Standard

An example of one of the ways in which BDF used the Disability Standard to assess Tideway's performance was to analyse how the organisation publicises its commitment to disability. BDF found examples of best practice being undertaken by Tideway. For example, in just over 18 months, the Access group has undertaken a number of actions to understand, raise awareness of, and address barriers experienced by people with a disability at Tideway offices and on site, including:

- Joining Business Disability Forum and commissioning this review.
- Developing an initial set of actions and associated success measures.
- Successfully advising on the implementation of workplace adjustments for a disabled employee.
- Holding a series of events to raise awareness of specific impairments including migraine and mental ill health.

Disability action plan

After reviewing each area of the business, BDF developed a Disability Action Plan, which set out a series of practical and evidence-based recommendations. These recommendations were tailored towards Tideway's organisational need and grounded in BDF's experience working for over twenty years with a range of public and private sector businesses.

After delivering the final report and Disability Action Plan, BDF held a workshop with key strategic leads from Tideway to ensure they were knowledgeable and confident in their role with regard to implementing recommendations.

The project was led by Brendan Roach, Senior Disability consultant at BDF. Speaking about this project, Brendan said:

"As a relatively new organisation, Tideway wanted to understand how disability impacts on its activities and to develop a plan to deliver best practice for its disabled employees and

stakeholders. By reviewing the disability performance of the whole organisation and developing an action plan, we were quickly able to provide Tideway with a basis for turning its obvious and deep commitment into tangible action."

Impact of project

Speaking about this review and the impact it has had at Tideway, Tracey Lee, Senior Legal Counsel & Company Secretary at Tideway said:

"Starting with a blank sheet of paper meant that we were presented with both a challenge and an opportunity as a completely new company able to start fresh and commit to an open environment that is fully accessible to disabled people. BDF joined us at the right time to help us develop best practice policies and procedures, but also to identify improvements across all functions so that we could improve the overall business commitment to its disability performance.

"The Disability Action Plan has provided Tideway's Ability Action Group with a framework and detailed plan outlining areas for improvement across the business. Each key business area is led by a Function Lead from within the business, for example Recruitment and Retention actions are led by our HR Function. This structure provided by the Action Plan has allowed us to focus on particular areas and to agree realistic timescales for completion.

"We have developed an Implementation Group, which works with each of the Function Leads to ensure that actions are closed or progress is made. One of the biggest difficulties is finding time outside of the 'day job' to dedicate the time required. BDF has been instrumental in assisting Tideway in certain areas, including the development of our Workplace Adjustment Procedure and training of Line Managers.

"Tideway's Ability Action Group is continuing to work through the Disability Action Plan and are striving towards a formal assessment against the Disability Standard in late 2017."

[Click here to view BDF's current consultancy project with Camden Council](#)

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