



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Scotland Equality Impact Assessment Record Assistive Technology Training

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

Title of Activity: Assistive Technology Training
Activity Lead: Lauren Dominick

Screening

Activity Aim

The aim of the proposed activity is to outsource Assistive Technology training, ensuring that our colleagues who utilise Assistive Technology receive the appropriate level of training and upskilling required to effectively complete their job role. This contributes to the strategic objective of training our staff to make sure they have the knowledge, confidence and understanding they need to do their jobs.

Who will it affect?

Assistive Technology training will primarily affect our colleagues who use Assistive Technology software. It is likely that some of these colleagues will have protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act (2010).

The training may also be undertaken by colleagues from the Learning and Leadership team, the IT Service Desk and the Onboarding team. Additionally, the learner's line managers, and colleagues whom they work with within their team, may also require this training.

Assistive technology training will affect different individuals to varying levels of extent depending on their reliance and use of assistive technology software. Overall, our colleagues who use Assistive Technology will benefit from this training as it will enable them to effectively fulfil their job role. Additionally, our colleagues who work with our Assistive Technology users such as their line managers or mentors, will also benefit in that they will gain confidence in supporting our Assistive Technology users day to day.

What might prevent the desired outcomes being achieved?

Assistive Technology training is dependent on Assistive Technology software being up to date and in working order on the learner's laptop. This requires assistance from the Onboarding team at time of joining and the IT Service Desk for ongoing support.

Learner's circumstances may impact their attendance on booked sessions which may pro-long their wait for their Assistive Technology training.

Suppliers cancelling at short notice may also prevent the training taking place.

Exploratory Workshop

Exploratory workshops were held via Microsoft Teams on two separate occasions throughout July 2023. Attendees were invited to the workshops based on their use and/or involvement with Assistive Technology Software. During the workshops, Social Security Scotland colleagues and external stakeholders were provided the opportunity to reflect on scenarios involving the use of Assistive Technology during a training event whereby protected characteristics may be impacted (positively or negatively).

Both workshops were successful in providing a significant amount of evidence that shaped the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide further comments and feedback either directly to the representative organising the assessment or via the Learning and Leadership shared inbox (learningandleadership@socialsecurity.gov.scot).

Data and evidence gathered

The primary source of data was gathered from Social Security Scotland's most recent workforce data ⁱⁱ. This provided an understanding of protected characteristics within Social Security Scotland's workforce.

Age

The majority of Social Security Scotland's colleagues are aged between 30 to 39 accounting for 30.7% of the workforce; with 40-49 year olds accounting for the second biggest group at 24.4% of the workforce.

Disability

9.8% of all colleagues who have recorded diversity information stated that they have a disability. 48.5% of the workforce disability status is still unknown so it's likely that the number of colleagues with a disability could be higher.

Gender reassignment

The organisation doesn't currently hold data on gender reassignment status of our colleagues and the Scottish government has not yet published related statistics on the equality evidence finderⁱⁱⁱ, however data collated during the EQIA workshops is discussed below.

Pregnancy & maternity

The organisation doesn't currently have accessible data on the pregnancy and maternity status of our colleagues. However, given that we offer flexible working arrangements and promote a positive work life balance we can presume we will attract people who have desires to start a family whilst maintaining a career.

Ethnicity

Only 3.7% of our colleagues stated they belonged to an ethnic minority, with 53.7% declaring themselves as 'white'; 41.9% of the organisations ethnicity is unknown.

Religion or belief

22.2% of the organisation have stated that they belong to a religion, whilst 33.3% have stated that they are not religious; the rest are recorded as 'unknown'.

Sex

The majority of Social Security Scotland's workforce is female (61.4%).

Sexual orientation

As of March 2023, 49.7% of the workforce recorded themselves as heterosexual, 6.3% recorded themselves as Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual and the remainder either preferred not to say or did not record any data.

Care Experience

The organisation doesn't currently have accessible data on the care experience status of our colleagues.

DRAFT

Assessing the impacts and identifying opportunities to promote equality

Age

Impact

The overall impact of delivering Assistive Technology training on this protected characteristic is positive as this software can make digital interfaces more accessible to employees of all ages, helping to bridge the digital divide that can be more pronounced in older employees.

Deterioration in vision most commonly begins in adults who are in their 40s and continues throughout the lifespan^{iv}. Older employees may have age-related vision, hearing, or cognitive impairments. Assistive technology can help mitigate these, enabling them to continue to work effectively. With 48.2% of our colleagues being aged 40 or over the impact of this activity will be far reaching.

JAWS and ZoomText can be particularly beneficial for older employees who may struggle with vision impairments, making text-to-speech and screen magnification options readily available.

Texhelp Read&Write could support older employees who have age-related cognitive difficulties, by offering tools such as text-to-speech, prediction, and a dictionary it can make reading and writing more accessible.

Action

There is a possibility that there is a negative impact to older age groups as they may not be digital natives, giving them reduced confidence with technology. Allowing employees to learn at their own pace, by providing training materials in advance of sessions and course notes afterwards may reduce this impact.

It is pivotal not to assume that an older colleague may be less experienced on technology than a younger colleague therefore appropriate learning needs analysis should be conducted by the supplier to ensure they have understood the learner's needs.

Disability

Impact

Assistive technology is likely to have a positive impact on colleagues who have a disability and who require support from this software. The software can be transformative for employees with disabilities, providing them with the tools they need to perform tasks that support them in achieving their objectives.

Action

Whilst this software can benefit colleagues immensely it may also create frustrations and challenges if training is not delivered correctly or technology does not work properly. To overcome these challenges suppliers will be evaluated after the learning event to gauge learner's understanding and to receive learner feedback on knowledge of the supplier. Improvements will be suggested to the supplier based on feedback received and the supplier will be supported to implement these. The learner will be encouraged to contact the service desk as soon as technical issues arise with their equipment.

Additionally, technological compatibility between the Assistive Technology software and the organisation's systems, such as SPM, may pose challenges. The newly created accessibility team will work to mitigate this, by supporting live issue identification, escalation, and resolution.

Considerations must be made to colleagues with physical disabilities that have accessibility requirements. Accessible training locations at Social Security Scotland buildings will be made available along with virtual classrooms to ensure everyone has access to these learning opportunities.

Gender reassignment

Impact

Providing this Assistive Technology training to our colleagues signals an inclusive and supportive working environment, which includes those undergoing gender reassignment, thus creating a positive outcome of this activity.

Action

It is possible that speech recognition software may initially have difficulties adapting to the changes in the voice of an individual who may be transitioning. This could lead to frustrations and it is pivotal that support is given to the individual to overcome this by motivating them to continue to engage with their training.

Some individuals who are undergoing gender reassignment may experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety^v, if not handled with sensitivity, the

introduction of new technology and associated training could create pressure and heighten these symptoms further.

It is crucial that a respectful and inclusive learning environment is created to prevent any potential discomfort or discrimination. Learner's pronouns should be considered and respected. The organisation will work with the suppliers to ensure there is choice for the learner in variables such as the gender of the trainer and the location of the training (where gender neutral toilets may be required).

Pregnancy and maternity

Impact

The overall impact of Assistive Technology training on pregnant colleagues may be positive as Assistive Technology could support pregnant colleagues in maintaining productivity and engagement. Colleagues who work from home and have child caring responsibilities may benefit from speech recognition software such as Dragon. For example, breastfeeding mums may benefit from this software as they will be able to tend to, and care for, their baby whilst verbally instructing the software.

Action

It is important to recognise that pregnant colleagues who return to work after a period of maternity leave may feel overwhelmed by the learning curve associated with new technologies. They may also face challenges with the time commitments related to Assistive Technology training for both the duration of the learning event and the time required to embed learning following the event.

To mitigate these challenges additional support will be available where required. The Learning and Leadership team will work with our colleagues to understand exact learning needs and potential barriers to meeting these needs. Where a colleague requires additional training sessions, extra time in between session to embed learning, or one-to-one training, actions will be taken to ensure needs are met.

Ethnicity

Impact

Making Assistive Technology training available to our colleagues across the organisation promotes a diverse and inclusive working environment; sending a positive message to all colleagues including those who have different ethnic backgrounds.

Action

Attention must be paid to training materials to ensure they are not culturally sensitive and that they take language proficiency into account. Some software may not fully

support all languages or dialects, which could lead to frustration and exclusion for some colleagues. When communicating with suppliers we must ensure that language proficiency of the learner is highlighted to ensure language barriers do not arise and impact the quality of learning experience. Training materials should be available in multiple languages to accommodate a diverse workforce.

Religion or belief

Impact

Assistive Technology training could help all colleagues who rely on the software, regardless of their religion or belief. These tools can create an inclusive environment where all individuals have equal access to information and resources.

Action

Considerations must be made to the timing of these Assistive Technology learning events. Open communication with the learner is required to avoid coinciding scheduled learning events with religious holidays or festivals, and/or prayer times.

Training must be provided in a manner that is respectful to all religions and beliefs, and these beliefs must be accommodated. The learner should have options surrounding their training and freedom of choice to ensure their religious needs are met. For example, the option to select a male or female trainer.

Sex

Impact

Making Assistive Technology training available to all colleagues demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion, benefiting employees of all genders.

Action

Speech recognition software, such as Dragon, may not perform well with higher-pitched voices' although this has significantly improved over time, the organisation will work with learners who may experience these issues.

Attention must be paid to training materials and behaviour of the trainer, to ensure that gender bias is not implemented in the design of the materials nor the delivery of them.

Conversations should be had with learners to ensure needs and preferences of all genders are considered. For example, the option of a male or female trainer and training locations that have gender neutral toilets.

Sexual orientation

Impact

A colleague's sexual orientation should not impact their Assistive Technology training in any way and vice versa.

Action

The only potential negative impact could be prejudice of the trainer whom is provided by the supplier. The organisation will work with learners to create open conversations and safe space for discussion; if the learner highlights concerning behaviours of their trainer, this will be dealt with immediately and addressed with the supplier.

Care experience

Impact

Assistive Technology training can positively impact our care experienced colleagues; it gives them access to specialist trainers who can upskill them on software that supports them in their day to day tasks.

Action

With trauma more likely amongst care experienced people^{vi}, trauma-informed practice should be implemented throughout the planning phase and learning phase of Assistive Technology training. Choice should be given to learners on a number of variables such as, sex of the trainer and location of the training.

It is likely that care experienced people could face digital exclusion^{vii} whilst in care, which may hinder their competency with technology and devices such as laptops. A person centred approach to training should be taken whereby needs of the learner and IT literacy is taken into account when organising and delivering the training.

Public Sector Equality Assessment

Social Security Scotland will ensure a person centred and trauma-informed approach is taken when planning, and agreeing, training events with both learners and suppliers. Feedback will be sought from learners regarding learner experience and impact of Assistive Technology training to continuously improve learning and development offerings. By providing this training, the organisation is enabling it's people to have the knowledge, confidence and understanding they need to do their jobs whilst:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Promoting good relations among and between different groups.

Decision making and monitoring

How has the Equality Impact Assessment analysis shaped the proposed activity process so far?

The Equality Impact Assessment analysis re-affirmed the importance of tailored, person-centred training. Both suppliers and learners are now asked what accessibility requirements they may have prior to commencing their training and/or entering our buildings to ensure these are in place for the training event. Learners are also asked for their preferences in relation to certain variables such as, training location, dates and times to ensure that the learner has choice and empowerment over the delivery of their training.

This analysis has not highlighted any additional costs or resources required by the organisation when implementing the activity.

How will the Equality Impact Assessment analysis help develop better outcomes for people and communities?

The overall impact of Assistive Technology training on our colleagues will be overwhelmingly positive. Training on this software can make digital interfaces more accessible to all employees, helping to bridge any digital divides. Our colleagues who use Assistive Technology will now be given the appropriate level of training and upskilling required to effectively complete their job role.

How will the activity be monitored going forward?

The Forecasting and Evaluations Manager within the Learning and Leadership team will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating this equality impact assessment throughout the procurement process and once the successful supplier has been decided upon.

Monitoring will be an ongoing part of the process for Assistive Technology Training. The Learning and Leadership team will evaluate the learner's experience during training by sending a follow-up survey to learners post training event. Learner's experience will be scored on a Likert scale of one to four (see table 1). If the feedback scores a one on two or more occasions then Social Security Scotland will open up discussions with the supplier. Learner feedback will be shared with supplier and user led improvements to the training will be considered.

If the supplier scores below two on a further instance, following discussions around the previous two occasions, then termination of contract may be considered.

TECHNICAL SCORING GUIDANCE		
Training will be evaluated using the following methodology:		
Score	Definition	Description
1	Poor	Trainer had limited knowledge on the assistive technology software; trainer was unable to answer most questions relating to the functionality of the software.
2	Acceptable	Trainer had a reasonable understanding of the assistive technology software and was able to answer most questions relating to the functionality of the software.
3	Good	Trainer had a good knowledge and understanding of the assistive technology software and was able to answer all questions relating to the functionality of the software.
4	Excellent	Trainer had an excellent knowledge and understanding of the assistive technology software. Trainer was able to provide in-depth answers to all questions relating to the functionality of the software.

Table 1.

Further evaluation will be carried out, consisting of learner surveys and focus groups, based on the training event. Although supplier will not be graded on this additional element of evaluation, it will enable further conversation around delivery of training to understand learner experience.

Authorisation

Declaration

I am satisfied with the Equality Impact Assessment that has been undertaken and give my authorisation for the results to be published on the Social Security Scotland website.

Name: Nicola Rudnicki

Position: Deputy Director, People and Place

Date: 30/10/23

DRAFT

References

-
- i [Social Security Scotland's Corporate Plan 2020-2023](#)
 - ii [Social Security Scotland – workforce information: March 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
 - iii [Equality Evidence Finder](#)
 - iv [Adult Vision: 41 to 60 Years of Age | AOA](#)
 - v [A systematic review of social stress and mental health among transgender and gender non-conforming people in the United States - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
 - vi [Care experienced children and young people's mental health | Iriss](#)
 - vii [The digital divide The impact on the rights of care leavers in Scotland Inform.pdf \(celcis.org\)](#)

DRAFT