

**GUIDELINES
FOR INTEGRATING PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES
INTO THE WORKPLACE**

“A DISABLED PERSON CAN BECOME A RESOURCE”

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FOR INTEGRATING PEOPLE
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CONTENTS

1. The “Guidelines for integrating people with disabilities into the workplace” programme
2. Programme objectives
3. How to implement the programme
4. Sectors of activity
 - 4.1 The task of the Key Executive
 - 4.2 Placement mapping of people with disabilities into the workplace
 - 4.3 Status report on integration
 - 4.4 Recruitment of disabled staff
 - 4.5 The selection interview
 - 4.6 Work environment
 - 4.7 Work safety
 - 4.8 Accessibility
 - 4.9 Workstation
 - 4.10 Sensitisation actions
 - 4.11 Development, training and career advancement
5. The disabled person at work: targeted job placement
6. From placement to integration
7. Products and services for everyone - the “Design for all” concept
8. Useful questions
9. Why your organisation/enterprise should adopt this programme
10. Past programme activities

APPENDICES

Reference legislation
Accessibility and Design for all
Sectors of activity

1

The “Guidelines for integrating people with disabilities into the workplace” programme

The “Guidelines for integrating people with disabilities into the workplace” programme was created in 2001 through a joint effort by the ASPHI Onlus Foundation and the IBM Italia Foundation. The specific objectives of the programme are to assist the business community to improve integration into the workplace of people with disabilities by transforming their recruitment from a legislative obligation into an opportunity that can be valorised and rendered productive, and to increase the accessibility of goods and services produced so that they also benefit people with special needs, in particular disabled people.

Increase in productivity, which can be also noticed in quantitative terms, is one of the reasons that the Programme immediately attracted keen interest from many enterprises.

Indeed, the Programme has developed considerably since it began in 2001 and it has benefited from important contributions and actions by a variety of different organisations. Today, the work group is composed of local and regional public administrations, large public sector organisations and small and medium sized enterprises.

Before examining the contents of the Programme and some of the activities conducted over the last few years, an outline of reference legislation will help put the Programme into perspective.

Initial “Guidelines programme” measures derive from Law 68/1999 “Right to work regulations for people with disabilities”, which recognises work carried out by disabled people as the exercise of their right to social appurtenance, and extends the responsibility of organisations and enterprises to pay particular attention to this aspect through effective placement of disabled people into the workplace.

Therefore, under this law, disabled people represent - or should represent – a significant part of every organisation (7 per cent for enterprises with over 50 employees).

At the same time, the Programme recognises the importance of the fact that products and services should benefit everyone, according to the “Design for all” concept. Planning procedures and solutions from the very beginning that also benefit disabled and/or disadvantaged people means focusing on a wider segment of the population and, consequently, a wider target. Not

only does this become an asset for the corporate image of your enterprise, it also benefits economic performance by increasing the target of potential consumers/customers.

Of course, the principle of “Design for all” also includes the design and creation of ICT applications and websites that are accessible to people with disabilities.

In order to reinforce this concept and to oblige organisations to apply it in some form, Law 4/2004 (also called the Stanca Law, after the name of the Minister of Technological Innovation, Lucio Stanca, who promoted the law) was enacted in 2004.

The essence of Law 4/2004 “Provisions for the access of disabled people to ICT tools” lies in the principle of non-discrimination: all telematics information and services must also be available to the sector of the population with disabilities (including the elderly); disabled staff must be provided with hardware, software and adequate assistive technology; digital support for books and other educational and training material must respect accessibility requirements in keeping with the needs of disabled students¹.

The law is binding for central and local public administrations, and also for enterprises supplying public services. At the same time, it also constitutes a benchmark and an incentive for the entire business community.

2

Programme objectives

This document provides guidelines concerning an organised ensemble of actions and interventions that are logical and suitable for the environment of each individual organisation, for a public or private sector institution or business enterprise seeking to:

Increment the productivity of disabled workers, promote and support observance of the “Design for all” concept for products and services, thereby contributing to concretely achieve Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the specific sector concerning disabled people.

¹ Refer to the website www.innovazione.gov.it for information about the text of the law, in particular Article 5

3

How to implement the programme

The organisation or enterprise incorporates the Programme objectives into its routine management procedures and assigns specific tasks to each Function considering them factors for assessing its efficiency.

In particular:

- ▶ A formal commitment is made to adopt the above-mentioned objectives and guidelines in order to pursue and to transmit them to the entire organisation, as a management commitment and manifestation of the decision of Top Management.
- ▶ A Key Executive is appointed who will report directly to Top Management as the person responsible for the objectives and implementation of the guidelines.

This figure does not necessarily need to coincide with the Personnel Manager and, on the contrary, a distinction between them is preferable in a way so as not to run the risk of a possible confusion of roles.

4

Sectors of activity

The singling out of activities and projects to implement varies from business to business and also depends on the type: private company, public sector institution, organisation with a regional base, etc.

One possible sector, taken as an ensemble of steps to implement for fulfilling the Programme includes both the different periods that mark the disabled person's recruitment (such as classified ads and conducting of the interview, initial reception at the workplace, assessment of skills, job identification and career prospects) and the aspects that influence productivity (such as verification of the work environment, safety, physical accessibility to facilities, communication with colleagues and senior staff, use of support material with updates and tutoring).

4.1

The task of the Key Executive

As mentioned above, the Key Executive is appointed by and reports directly to Top Management as the person responsible for the implementation of the Programme. The tasks of the Key Executive can be personalised according to any particular procedures and requirements of each organisation.

In any case, the Key Executive will be responsible for indicating the activities to fulfil the Programme's overall objectives and for specifying the areas at issue for each company function.

In particular, the Key Executive must ensure the following:

- ▶ Ongoing analyses of the situation of disabled people
- ▶ Contacts with employment agencies, schools, universities, etc.
- ▶ Periodic interviews with disabled people in the workplace
- ▶ Identification of educational courses and personal and professional enhancement programmes
- ▶ Identification of tutoring activities
- ▶ Selection and training of tutors
- ▶ Identification of support tools for tutoring activities
- ▶ Verification of the availability of support material and use
- ▶ Verification of architectural barriers
- ▶ Verification of plans for the implementation of Law 626 on safety
- ▶ Verification that products and services are developed for all, eventually sensitising research, production and marketing managers
- ▶ Accessibility and usability of internal procedures
- ▶ Accessibility to applications, websites and company Intranet
- ▶ ...

Special attention will be taken so that:

- ▶ Individual interviews are in line with procedures, content and frequency for all staff members.
- ▶ Enhancement programmes for disabled people are included in company planning along with those for other staff members.

Concentration of disabled people in groups or departments within the same function is avoided in order to encourage effective integration.

4.2

Placement mapping of people with disabilities into the workplace

Carrying out a census of people with disabilities into the workplace for the purpose of gathering as much information as possible is an important phase.

In observance of privacy laws, the Personnel and Human Resources Departments can obtain:

- ▶ Personal data (age, gender, geographic origin, type of disability, etc.) of people with disabilities officially recruited under Law 68/99
- ▶ Information concerning responsibilities held within the organisation
- ▶ Past history within the organisation: positions held, promotions and salary increases, level of seniority, social security contributions, etc.

This will provide a description that reflects the situation in the workplace and the characteristics of the disabled people employed. It is also a good basis to begin a series of targeted actions aimed at enhancing productivity and improving job performance.

4.3

Status report on integration

In order to develop the Programme, it is important to verify the status of integration in the workplace. Therefore, it is useful to foster qualitative/quantitative research aimed at bringing to light the difficulties and opportunities of integration and related practical and concrete advantages including economic performance.

This type of research can be carried out with a questionnaire form that gathers information and reports the degree of satisfaction with various aspects of job placement, some typically concerning disability conditions (i.e. physical characteristics of the working environment or the supply of ICT support materials) and others common to all co-workers within the organisation (i.e. content and work autonomy, social relations, official and unofficial recognition of services rendered, career advancement, etc.)

Each element has an effect not only on job placement but also on actual

productivity and can thus be expressed in quantitative and economic terms. The questionnaire form can be given to both disabled co-workers and to their superiors/managers in order to assess any discrepancies in perception. This procedure also consists in:

- ▶ Identifying criticality and opportunities for improvement.
- ▶ Comparing the needs and expectations of disabled co-workers with what is expected of them by their superiors/managers.
- ▶ Verifying the effectiveness of projects undertaken.
- ▶ Demonstrating the interest of the organisation in understanding the needs of its co-workers.

The analysis of the findings will lead to the proposal and implementation of action plans for further improvement.

4.4

Recruitment of disabled staff

The principle of non-discrimination is respected first and foremost in the selection process, which must ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as the non-disabled.

As far as staff search procedures are concerned, several simple indications are given below:

- ▶ Omit any requirements that are not job-specific in the description of the ideal candidate.
- ▶ Ensure that documentation regarding recruitment transmits the correct message with respect to the organisation's positive approach towards disabled people.
- ▶ Classified ads on the Internet should be accessible to everyone.

Organisations can work with employment agencies, provincial job centres and associations of disabled people to ensure that their search effectively meets the needs of aspiring co-workers as well as those of the workplace.

When searching for a disabled person for a specific type of job, organisations should be prepared to be flexible: where necessary, changes in the work environment and workstation for the same job can be implemented, as well as in the contract conditions proposed.

4.5

The selection interview

People with disabilities must be able to feel at ease when sustaining interviews and recruitment tests.

- ▶ When a disabled candidate is summoned for an interview, ask yourself if any special arrangement needs to be made for the person. For example, the presence of a sign-language interpreter or an assistant for someone who has a walking difficulty may be appropriate. In the case of a candidate with a hearing impairment, it would be useful to ensure that the face and lips of the interviewer are brightly lit so that they can be seen more easily.
- ▶ If possible, provide the name of a contact person in the workplace with whom the candidate may discuss any practical needs in private before the interview.
- ▶ Ensure that the venue for the interview is accessible to candidates with disabilities.
- ▶ Make sure that people with disabilities are able to compete in recruitment tests on equal terms with non-disabled candidates. Arrangements could be made for extra time, a PC, reading and writing support material and the presence of a person to read the questions out loud or to present the problems.
- ▶ Analyse the candidate's abilities before speaking of the person's disability. But do not be afraid to discuss how the disability could affect work performance, as disabled people expect you to raise the question.

If, on the other hand, it is not possible to hire the person immediately and the individual is considered an asset for the organisation, an alternative position can be sought, such as a period of training or internship, depending on the person's needs and on the opportunities offered by the organisation

4.6

Work environment

When the selection of a disabled candidate is successfully concluded, it is very important to plan services that ensure the immediate identification and resolution of any problems that may arise. In this sense, it is essential that direct superiors and colleagues maintain constant contact with the worker, especially in the beginning.

After hiring a worker with a disability, it is sometimes necessary for organisations to make some changes to environmental conditions that enable the person to work with maximum efficiency.

Disabled workers have the right to a work environment that guarantees their safety, and allows them access to their work area and to recreational areas, which give them the opportunity to interact with other employees. Many disabled people do not have any special needs and when they do, solutions are often very simple: brighter lighting, a computer with special support material or a Dictaphone is often sufficient.

4.7

Work safety

Everything possible should be done to ensure the safety of disabled workers. For example, people with sight or hearing impairment need to be warned when alarms go off. It is often advisable - if not necessary - to indicate a contact person who is able to assist them in the event of evacuation. Some regional laws provide for the possibility of obtaining a financial contribution to offset the extra cost of safety measures.

4.8

Accessibility

Specific attention should be given to the accessibility of:

- ▶ Areas where the disabled person works
- ▶ Toilet facilities
- ▶ Canteens or catering facilities
- ▶ Company information and notices

and of course

- ▶ Stairs and lifts
- ▶ Parking areas

4.9

Workstation

It is important to envisage adapting workstations for persons with disabilities, equipping them with suitable technical aids that enable them to

work. Plans should also be made for periodic updating². There are also provisions in this case that allow organisations to obtain a financial contribution for this purpose.

4.10

Sensitisation actions

Enterprises must encourage all action necessary to facilitate the reception of persons with disabilities and their placement. In particular, managers and departments handling human resources need to be sensitised, as well as colleagues who will be in direct contact with the disabled worker³.

4.11

Development, training and career advancement

Information about career prospects and opportunities for promotion must be available and transmitted in a way that is totally accessible to workers with disabilities within the organisation. In particular, attention should be given when this information is supplied by telematics and/or electronic means.

Likewise, training and continuing education courses must benefit all workers, including those with disabilities, making the appropriate changes and integrations in form, content and materials where necessary.

5

The disabled person at work: targeted job placement

Every new staff member goes through a process of personal transition to the work environment, which is specific to each individual organisation. The role a person plays within the organisation contributes to define the person's social identity. This is also a reason why job placement constitutes an

² For example, the workstation for a sight-impaired worker could include a PC equipped with a screen reader, vocal synthesizer and Braille bar.

³ See some of the actions that can be implemented further on.

important phase in the life of each of us.

An enterprise that is open to the placement of all types of people shows that it is receptive to the individual's need for personal and professional growth. This is true for everyone, but it can be particularly significant in the case of people with disabilities. Indeed, job placement of a disabled person that is not well targeted and a mismatch causes disorientation and a lack of self-confidence with respect to the person's abilities and can be a cause for embarrassment for colleagues who are not properly sensitised.

Therefore, it is necessary to start with a targeted placement that identifies the approach to orientation, training and job placement in relation to the characteristics of the workstation and to the individual's actual ability to work, especially if disabled.

This is a task for the entire organisation and, in particular, for the department and direct managers, who can assign a tutor if needed. The tutor is a person within the company to whom the task of receiving and mentoring a disabled co-worker is entrusted. This position is a key moment during which the disabled person is able to learn the "job" by means of direct experience in an actual work context. The company tutor does more than make available technical know-how; he is above all responsive to the person's needs and becomes a point of reference.

The tutor:

- ▶ Establishes a trusting relationship with the disabled person, who looks to the tutor as a support person and as someone to refer to at all times during work.
- ▶ Takes care of the person's socialisation within the company by encouraging both overall awareness and functional integration within the person's department.
- ▶ Is responsible for an overall assessment of the person's work placement.

6

From placement to integration

"If a disabled person is admitted into a company that does not enact any changes, we say that the person is assimilated; on the other hand, if acceptance includes adaptation on the part of both the disabled person and the organisation, we can then speak of integration." (A. Canevaro)

The above approach, suggested as a way of overcoming well-known difficulties typical of people with disabilities (how many “not well known” difficulties are typical of “normal people?") leads to a genuine integration of the disabled person into the workplace. Consequently, targeted job placement acquires validity and true significance and conditions are established for an efficient and productive participation of the disabled person in the workplace in response to company requirements.

Some other key phases are:

- ▶ Training periods to foster reciprocal understanding between the disabled person and employer.
- ▶ Assignment of a tutor for the disabled worker.
- ▶ Agreements with organisations, associations and centres for specialised training
- ▶ Integration projects between schools and universities and the employment market for the purpose of developing training courses to facilitate the convergence of work supply and demand, and to assist professional choices through direct contact with the employment market.

7

Products and services for everyone – the “Design for all” concept

Any product or service that is developed or created can also be conceived for use by people with disabilities, and generally for consumers with "special needs". There are two aspects involved in this principle:

- ▶ Commercial: disabled users or people with “special needs” - especially if we include the fast-growing elderly population – have a numerical and economic significance and can be an important target as an expanding market.
- ▶ Corporate image: limiting or excluding barriers to the accessibility of products and services implies being responsive to people with difficulties, an attitude that is valued more and more by society in general.

This principle, known as Design for all, means that products and environments must be designed to be used by all categories of people in the widest sense possible, without the need to resort to adaptations or separate

planning. It implies constant attention from the very beginning of the development of any product or service. As a matter of fact, it is economically advantageous to apply these principles during the development phase of a new product or service, rather than modify an already existing product or service.

Design for all is also called universal design. Similar terms, used in a different context, are: barrier-free design, inclusive design and transgenerational design.

The Centre for Universal Design (founded in 1989 at the North Carolina University in the USA) has promoted the use of the term and has drawn up a series of Principles and Guidelines.

Therefore, useful knowledge can be gained by those who are involved in the development of new products or services from the Design for all philosophy and from the widely accepted recommendations available from the organisations that deal with disabled people at an institutional level.

8

Useful questions

Correct implementation of the Guidelines for the placement of people with disabilities on the employment market can benefit from the following questions that may help you identify the points of interest for your company on the subject of disability.

- ? Are you familiar with Law 68/99 for the placement of people with disabilities?
- ? Are you familiar with the applications in your Region of outline Law 104/92 and the advantages you can offer?
- ? What action are you taking to encourage disabled people to apply for a job with you?
- ? How are you ensuring that disabled workers have the same access to training, career advancement and promotions as other employees?
- ? Do you ask your disabled employees what they think of the policies and measures that concern them?
- ? Do you try to understand their real potential?
- ? Are you sure that people in key positions in the workplace, such as staff, R&D and production managers have sufficient knowledge of the issues concerning disability?

- ? Are your products and services accessible to everyone?
- ? Are you sure that the principles of Design for all are well known and applied?

9

Why an organisation/enterprise should adopt this programme

Beyond the role demanded of every organisation/enterprise as part of society and participation in its aspirations, there are other considerations that prompt a commitment in this field, such as:

- ▶ Numerically speaking, disabled employees are also an important part of every organisation (about 7% pursuant to Law 68/99).
- ▶ 15% of the population and 12.7% of families⁴ are concerned by issues involving various types of disability, and are thus an important and significant reference and market target.
- ▶ Today's social and economic context demand that organisations/enterprises implement Corporate Social Responsibility, which is achieved through actions that ensure confidence, transparency, loyalty, respect and responsiveness with regard to end customers. This context favours with support and approval those organisations that demonstrate a real responsiveness to their expectations. Hence, the necessity and advantage for organisations/enterprises to acquire an "ethical know-how" and a "responsive attitude" to the subject of integration of people with disabilities, staff and customers included.
- ▶ At the same time the gradual acquisition of autonomy by disabled people, like the presence of the elderly, see that the importance of customers with special needs is on the rise among end consumers of products and services.
- ▶ Technical aids now available and the financial contributions provided for by various national and regional laws make it possible to view job placement of disabled people in a positive way with prospects of internal motivation and acceptance by the community within which the company operates.

⁴ Source: ISTAT 1994 with subsequent updates in 1999

10

Past programme activities

In the field of inter-company information exchange:

Periodic meetings of the companies that make up the workgroup

- ▶ Use of an online computer platform, which enables sharing and exchange of information and experience, in addition to the circulation of the ensuing results and considerations.
- ▶ Activation of subgroups (called “Theme Teams”) for the analysis of ideas of particular interest (i.e. staff search and selection).

In the field of sensitisation and training of management, colleagues and overall company organisation:

- ▶ Seminars and workshops geared to selectors, personnel department staff and first-level managers to provide them with basic knowledge concerning disability and the employment market.
- ▶ Seminars and workshops on specific subjects, such as “Diversity Management” and “Job Coaching” for the purpose of providing information and suggestions for the implementation of diversity valorisation, diversified communications and useful ICT aids.
- ▶ Tailor-made consulting services for optimum management of changes in the workplace concerning target placements, updating and professional re-qualification, reorganisation of activities, logistical aspects and company communications regarding people with disabilities.

In the field of accessibility and communications at the workstation:

- ▶ Voice mail – a system of remote vocal access to e-mail – that gives sight-impaired employees access to communications normally distributed in hard copy form that are accessible with difficulty.
- ▶ Useful maps, designed to facilitate orientation and identification of places for everyone, and in particular for the blind and visually impaired people. They are a useful means for facilitating accessibility and use of public areas or those open to the general public since they contain indications in both letters and in the Braille alphabet.
- ▶ Attendance record terminals, which also take into account the special requirements of disabled employees: these are terminals (timeclocks) equipped with templates with touch identifiable keys that enable the blind and visually impaired people to “find their way” more easily among keyboard numbers, and vocal synthesizers capable of reproducing data present on the screen with sounds.

APPENDICES

Reference legislation

a) National legislation:

Leg. Decree n. 469 of 23/12/1997: Transfer of functions and duties concerning the employment market to the Regions and local authorities pursuant to Art. 1 of the Law n. 59 of 15/03/1997, as modified by Art. 6, paragraph 2 of Law n. 68 of 12/03/1999 – Art. 6 “Suppression of collective bodies”.

Law n. 68 of 12/03/1999: Right to work regulations for people with disabilities.

Ministerial Decree of 22/11/1999: Criteria for transmitting information by employers subjected to the rules and regulations concerning mandatory recruitment pursuant to Law n. 68 of 12/03/1999 containing “Right to work regulations for people with disabilities”.

Ministerial Decree of 10/01/2000: Identification of qualifications equivalent to those of a blind switchboard operator, for application of Law n. 113 of 29/03/1999, pursuant to provisions of Art. 45, paragraph 12 of Law n. 144 of 17/05/1999.

Prime Ministerial Decree of 13/01/2000: Framework law concerning mandatory recruitment of people with disabilities, pursuant to Art. 1, paragraph 4, Law 68 of 12/03/1999.

Ministerial Decree n. 91 of 13/01/2000: Regulations containing rules for the function of the National Fund for the right to work of disabled people, established by Art. 13, paragraph 4 of Law n. 68 of 12/03/1999.

Law n. 126 of 18/05/2000: Conversion into law of decree n. 60 of 16/03/2000 containing urgent provisions to ensure the implementation of assistance measures in favour of disabled people with mental impairment.

Delegated Decree of 26 September 2000: Regional sharing of financial resources of the Fund for the right to work of disabled people, established by Art. 13, paragraph 4, of Law n. 68 of 12/03/1999.

Presidential Decree n. 333 of 10/10/2000: Enforcement regulations for the implementation of Law n. 68 of 12/03/1999 containing right to work rules for disabled people.

Law n. 30 of 14/02/2003: Delegated law n. 4 of 9/01/2004 concerning employment and the labour market: Provisions for the access of disabled people to ICT tools.

APPENDICES

- a) Some examples of regional legislation concerning the employment of people with disabilities:

Regional Law n. 12 of 10/04/2001 REGION OF FRIULI-
VENEZIA-GIULIA

(Provisions concerning right to work of disabled people, teleworking and social security).

Regional Law n. 13 of 04/08/2003 REGION OF LOMBARDY

(Enhancement of access to employment of disabled and disadvantaged people).

Regional Law n. 51 of 29/08/2000 REGION OF PIEDMONT

(Regional Fund for the employment of disabled people).

Regional Law n. 16 of 03/08/2001 REGION OF VENETO

(Rules and regulations for the right to work of disabled people).

Regional Law n. 15 of 29/05/2003 REGION OF LIGURIA

(Rules and regulations for the job placement of disabled people).

Regional Law n. 14 of 25/02/2000 REGION OF EMILIA
ROMAGNA

(Enhancement of access to employment of disabled and disadvantaged people).

Regional Law n. 19 of 21/07/2003 REGION OF LAZIO

(Rules and regulations for the right to work of disabled people).

Regional Law n. 11 of 15/03/1984 REGION OF CAMPANIA

(Rules and regulations for the prevention, care and rehabilitation of disabled people and their reintegration into society).

Regional Law n. 24 of 26/11/2000 REGION OF SICILY

(Provisions for the job placement of people in socially useful positions. Urgent rules and regulations concerning employment and creation of the Regional Fund for the employment of disabled people).

APPENDICES

Accessibility and Design for all

The addresses of some Internet sites where information is available on the subject of accessibility and Design for all are given below.

Documentation about accessibility:

<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG> (English version)
<http://www.aib.it/aib/cwai/WAI-trad.htm> (translation)
<http://www.W3.org/WAI/References/QuickTips> (reference guidelines)
<http://www.webusabile.it> (in Italian)
<http://www.cnipa.gov.it> (in Italian)

Information about the Stanca Law:

<http://www.innovazione.gov.it>
<http://www.pubbliaccesso.it>

Documentation about Design for all:

http://www.ict.etsi.org/design_for_all.htm
<http://www.tiresias.org/guidelines/guide6/clause6.htm>
<http://www.design-for-all.org>
<http://www.e-accessibility.org>

APPENDICES

Sectors of activity

Guidelines flow chart

Appointment of Programme Manager	Head Office
Programme diffusion in the workplace	Key executive
Mapping of disabled people in the workplace	Key executive (Personnel dept.)
Status report on integration	Key executive (Personnel dept.)
Recruitment of disabled people	Personnel department
Selection interview	Personnel department
Work environment	Area division
Work safety	Safety division
Physical accessibility & logistics	Branch division
Workstation	Shopfloor department
Sensitisation managers/colleagues	Key executive, personnel dept., Area division
Training disabled people	Shopfloor department
Targeted placement	Office department, tutor
Development and career advancement	Personnel dept., Shopfloor dept.
Products and services for everyone	Production, Marketing

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