

Recruitment Equality

Accessibility, Equality and Diversity
on
Recruitment Websites

January 2011

Anne Tynan

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background	5
Disclaimer & Notes	6

INTRODUCTION

The Recruitment Industry's Perspective on Equality & Diversity	7
Recruitment and Technology	9
Website Accessibility: Gateway to Recruitment Heaven?.....	10
International Guidelines on Web Accessibility	11
AE&D: Accessibility, Equality & Diversity.....	13

RESULTS OF THE SCREENING EXERCISE

Section 1 Website Accessibility & Equality/Diversity Information.....	14
Section 2 Equality/Diversity Policies & Equality Legislation.....	17
Section 3 How Approaches to Equality & Diversity are Demonstrated	19
Section 4 Characteristics, Labels and Logos.....	24

CONCLUSION.....	27
-----------------	----

REFERENCES	28
------------------	----

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	30
-----------------------	----

© 2011 Tynan Publishing

ISBN 978-0-9530430-1-9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010, so recruitment organisations should already demonstrate knowledge of all their duties under the Act. Whether they do so can be gauged to some extent by the ‘window to the world’ that is their website. Although the Act does not specifically mention web products, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has made clear that it will apply to them. Recruitment websites should therefore be accessible to all.

Apart from accessible websites, there are other signs as to whether an organisation might be meeting some of the less visible duties inherent in the recruitment process. Such indications can give a strong hint as to whether a recruitment organisation is an Equality & Diversity Recruiter to the measure of the year 2011 or whether it has remained in the Dark Ages of recruitment inequality.

300 recruitment websites (including head hunters, recruitment consultants, job agencies, online recruiters and organisations’ internal recruitment departments) were screened during this exercise from November to December 2010, with the results collated and published in January 2011. Organisations examined ranged from global enterprises to small independent firms, with both public & private sector businesses included; these companies also embraced the widest possible range of professions and occupations, enabling a truly cross-sectional study of the recruitment industry.

KEY FINDINGS

54% of websites were Accessibility, Equality & Diversity ‘blank’

The majority of recruitment websites offered no Accessibility features for disabled people and provided no Equality or Diversity information.

25% offered either Accessibility features OR Equality & Diversity Information

These recruitment organisations had made a one-sided effort, without addressing the dual aspects of Accessibility and Equality & Diversity.

21% offered both Accessibility AND Equality & Diversity Information

These websites demonstrated that recruitment organisations were willing to take seriously their responsibility to ensure that the UK has an inclusive and diverse workforce.

With regard to the type of Equality & Diversity information found on recruitment websites, it was discovered that:

Only 3% of recruitment firms included Equality & Diversity information on their websites within Application & Recruitment procedures or Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Should one expect better than this?

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC), the industry's main representative body, stated in December 2005:

As recruiters you are uniquely placed, as the conduit between work seeker and client, to promote diversity and challenge discriminatory practice.

How many years, decades or centuries will some members of the recruitment industry wait until they decide to assume the mantle of such a wonderful power?

BACKGROUND

Various factors combined to compel me to undertake this brief study, which focuses on Website Accessibility and Equality & Diversity information provided on websites.

When the Equality Act came into effect on 1 October 2010, it led to a minor explosion of outrage among some members of the Human Resources and Recruitment community. This was not due to the Act, however, but to a related newspaper article with comments made by the entrepreneur Duncan Bannatyne.

The incident – labelled Bannatyne-gate – caught my attention because of my own previous experiences as a jobseeker, involving as it did trawling through the text on dozens of recruitment and employer websites. I was already aware that the recruitment industry was perhaps not the shining example of promoting Equality & Diversity that some clearly liked to think. The phrase ‘The lady doth protest too much, methinks’ came to my mind. This was consolidated by contact that I had with a number of recruiters, who tended to apologise that their companies had still to address issues of Accessibility, Equality & Diversity. It is all very well stating that you support the Equality Act and are therefore upset if someone demonstrates ignorance of it – but I am inclined to think that you are no better than your target of criticism if you have still not put your own recruitment house in Equality & Diversity order!

The month after Bannatyne-gate, the BBC ran a week of features looking at the issues facing people with disabilities. This included a disability survey and an article by their political correspondent Gary O’Donoghue, on the challenges disabled people encounter in the job market. During the same week at the end of November 2010, the British Standards Institution (BSI) published the first British Standard to deal with web accessibility: *BS 8878:2010 Web accessibility – Code of practice*.

Both items provided an extra incentive to pursue this study.

As I had previously carried out screening exercises of university websites some years ago (cfr References), it was relatively easy to carry out something similar with recruitment websites. I based the sample of sites on the industry’s own lists of the recruitment crème de la crème, namely those companies shortlisted for various recruitment industry awards for 2010 and 2011. This produced 300 companies, providing a sufficiently broad range for the purposes of my study.

‘*Recruitment Equality: Accessibility, Equality & Diversity on Recruitment Websites*’ will – I hope – stir up a Recruitment-gate reaction as recruiters are taking up the reins of their work for the year ahead.

Anne Tynan
London, 25 January 2011

DISCLAIMER & NOTES

Information provided in this document is intended as general information only, with opinions expressed being mine alone. The document does not constitute legal advice and no responsibility can be taken for the use of the document by any reader in any context.

As this is a limited study, references have been restricted. There has not been time to include an exhaustive list of other potential sources of advice and information.

Several colleagues are currently reviewing the accessibility of this document, with any necessary revisions to be made within the first month of publication. Web links were live at the time of publication.

Comments can be emailed to a.tynan@o2.co.uk or posted on Twitter [@AnneTynan](https://twitter.com/AnneTynan)

The following charts have been included in this report, with explanatory text provided:

PAGE	FIGURE	CONTENTS
14	1	Website Accessibility & Equality/Diversity Information Provided on Recruitment Websites
20	2	Location of Equality & Diversity Information on Recruitment Websites
24	3	Characteristics Mentioned on Recruitment Websites
25	4	Logos and Labels on Recruitment Websites

As **Accessibility, Equality & Diversity** are the keywords of this document, I have generally capitalised the three words to place further emphasis upon them.

INTRODUCTION

The Recruitment Industry's Perspective on Equality & Diversity

Before undertaking a study of this nature, one should ask whether it is correct to assume that recruitment organisations should already be aware of their obligations with regard to Accessibility, Equality & Diversity.

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC)

The representative body of the £19.7 billion recruitment and staffing industry is The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC). The REC website states that in January 2011, it currently has 8000 corporate members (agencies and businesses), with 5500 members of the **Institute of Recruitment Professionals** (recruitment consultants & other industry professionals). Corporate members have the right to display the REC logo, which appeared on over a third of the sites in this study; it is more than likely that many of the other organisations in the study are also REC members even if they do not use the logo.

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation Code of Professional Practice

All REC members are required to abide by the REC Code of Professional Practice. The Code includes the following Principle:

Principle 4 – Respect for Diversity

a) Members should adhere to the spirit of all applicable human rights, employment laws and regulations and will treat work seekers, clients and others without prejudice or unjustified discrimination. Members should not act on an instruction from a client that is discriminatory and should, wherever possible, provide guidance to clients in respect of good diversity practice.

b) Members and their staff will treat all work seekers and clients with dignity and respect and aim to provide equity of employment opportunities based on objective business related criteria.

c) Members should establish working practices that safeguard against unlawful or unethical discrimination in the operation of their business.

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

These requirements are mirrored for members of the Institute of Recruitment Professionals, who must abide by the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Standard 5 of this Code states:

Respect for Diversity

a) You must ensure that you treat all clients and work seekers with dignity and respect, and aim to provide employment opportunities based on objective business and competency related criteria.

b) You should always promote fair recruitment practices.

c) You should not act on an instruction from a client that may be discriminatory and, where possible, you should provide guidance to clients in respect of good diversity practice.

The REC Diversity Pledge; Diversity Assured Recruitment Certification

In addition to these core requirements, in December 2005 the REC launched a **Diversity Pledge** in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus. The Pledge is

'an inclusive commitment made by recruiters to harness the talent and potential of everyone to achieve business success' and states that 'As recruiters you are uniquely placed, as the conduit between work seeker and client, to promote diversity and challenge discriminatory practice.'

Companies that sign the Pledge can advertise themselves as a '**Diversity Pledged Recruiter**', although this requires only that they fill in their contact details on the REC website. According to the website, 341 companies have signed up to the Pledge to date; **2%** of the sites within this study stated that they had done so. Companies signed up to the Pledge can also go further and pay to have their diversity policies and practices fully assessed to achieve the '**Diversity Assured Recruitment**' certification. **2%** of the sites examined stated that they had achieved this certification.

As this report was about to be published, REC and Jobcentre Plus launched a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 11 January 2011. This is a partnership agreement outlining specific areas of co-operation in helping people into work in the current challenging economic climate. Two areas highlighted in the MOU are:

- *Raise awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce by giving employers clear guidance and access to the widest range of people seeking work*
- *Act as champions against discrimination and challenge unfair employment policies*

2011 is therefore the right time for the Recruitment & Employment Confederation to act as a champion of upgrading recruitment websites in terms of their Accessibility, Equality & Diversity.

Recruitment and Technology

An article in issue 484 of the UK Recruiter Newsletter (15 December 2010) stated:

Technology is becoming increasingly central to the operations of well-run, dynamic, efficient and successful recruitment businesses.....2011 will see the implementation of legislation with significant consequences for the staffing sector and which will have an impact on systems and processes. Changes to the Equality Act come into force in April... Do your budgets make allowances for the changes in your processes and systems you will have to make to accommodate the... changes which the legislation brings?

Your website will increasingly act as the front door to your business and all communications should be centred and tracked on your site.

Ready for the year ahead?

Raymond Pennie, Commercial Director,
Kamanchi recruitment IT outsourcing specialists

If a website will increasingly act as the front door to a recruitment organisation, Accessibility is the key that will open that website front door to all. Equality & Diversity are the hinges of the website that allow the front door to swivel to allow visitors to move freely around inside it.

This study will focus initially on the Accessibility of recruitment websites. It will then examine Equality & Diversity information provided – if at all – on those websites.

Website Accessibility: Gateway to Recruitment Heaven?

In this era of e-recruitment, one would certainly expect recruitment websites to offer the highest standards of Accessibility. The REC's use of the word 'conduit' to describe recruiters could be applied equally to organisations' websites, which are usually one of the first points of contact between recruiters, clients and candidates.

Although other aspects of social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are also key recruitment tools, they have not been included within the scope of this present study. However, the British Standard document (see below) is equally applicable to these tools; organisations should use it to help to determine their strategy and policy for dealing with eAccessibility; the document provides advice on developing an organisational web accessibility policy (p.5).

BS 8878:2010 Web accessibility – Code of practice (p.2) reminds us of:

the importance of ensuring all workplace web products are accessible, as they ensure employment opportunities and employment retention is maximized for the widest possible range of ages and abilities, which benefits society, employers and employees.

Various reasons dictate why recruitment organisations should ensure the Accessibility of their websites:

- an Accessible website opens up a company to a much wider market. BS 8878 (p.2) explains that websites (and other web products) which provide Accessibility features such as text alternatives to images & video captions can increase website hits because they are more highly visible to search engines.
- a disabled person might have legal grounds for complaint if a site is inaccessible
- an Accessible website demonstrates an understanding that inclusivity is the hallmark of a forward-looking organisation

Before examining how recruitment websites cater for Equality & Diversity, it is worthwhile providing a brief overview of Web Accessibility issues. Even if website design, development and maintenance are specialised skills, it should not be beyond the ability of all recruitment professionals to understand the basic requirements for an Accessible website. It is also important to understand the global nature of Web Accessibility issues; international guidelines are obviously most appropriate for the web so recruitment professionals should be aware of their existence and relevance. The WCAG Guidelines described on the next page represent the gold standard internationally for all Web Accessibility issues.

International Guidelines on Web Accessibility

The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect.

Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web & Director of the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium)

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community founded in 1994, in which member organisations, full time staff and the public work together to develop standards to ensure the Web reaches its full potential.

W3C produced the first **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 (WCAG)** (1999). There are 14 guidelines for web pages, with 65 checkpoints broken down into three Levels: Level **A**, Level **AA** and Level **AAA**. The checkpoints for each level can be viewed online: <<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/checkpoint-list.html>>

A second version of the guidelines – **WCAG 2.0** (2008) – relates to all content that is presented to users via an HTTP address. This means that it relates to downloadable documents and ‘scripted interfaces’ (programming languages that allow control of software applications) as well as web pages.

There are four main criteria in the second version:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Perceivable | Web content is made available to the senses – sight, hearing &/or touch |
| Operable | Interface forms, controls, and navigation are operable |
| Understandable | Content and interface are understandable |
| Robust | Content can be used reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies |

The full checklist can be viewed online:

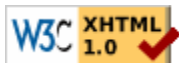
< <http://webaim.org/standards/wcag/WCAG2Checklist.pdf>>

Three **logos** are used to demonstrate conformity with the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Content providers are solely responsible for the use of these logos, as claims are not verified by W3C; however, it seems unlikely that someone who has made the effort to use them would do so unless they had been correctly applied. The very low incidence of their use on recruitment websites in this study – only 2 of the 300 sites displayed the W3C logos – suggests that knowledge of the underlying issues are required before they are displayed.



W3C WAI-AA WCAG 1.0

The logo indicates that the creator of a web page believes that the page meets basic criteria to conform to at least level **AA** of the Guidelines, as outlined above. This involves manually reviewing each piece of content and control, as most of the criteria can only be evaluated by human judgement.



W3C XHTML 1.0

W3C provide a free online validation service so that web developers can check for themselves the mark up of web pages: < <http://validator.w3.org/>>.

The logo indicates that a web page has been successfully checked as being 'interoperable' between different web applications and services.



W3C CSS

W3C also provides an online service for checking the Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and (X)HTML documents with style sheets: <<http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/>>.

CSS is a computer language that enables the content of a document to be separated from the ways in which it is presented visually – i.e. layout, colours, fonts, etc. The logo indicates that this has been done by whoever is responsible for the website.

At the time of carrying out this study, therefore, Web Accessibility Guidelines have existed for over a decade and were most recently updated two years ago. It is unquestionably time for recruitment websites to reflect their content. What happened when the 300 sites within this study were examined? I have not undertaken to test out the technical accessibility of each website but rather to focus on information provided about or relating to Accessibility, Equality & Diversity.

Some international organisations whose websites were examined provided information relevant to the organisation's parent country rather than the UK; this was often the case with US companies. Apart from the fact that such information is not always relevant in the UK context, other factors make it advisable to provide AE&D information specific to the UK. BS 8878 states (p.23-24)

NOTE 1 While WCAG are widely recognized internationally, some web products which organizations consider procuring may claim conformity to national guidelines from outside Britain.

NOTE 2 Many non-British guidelines are subsets of WCAG (e.g. U.S. Federal Government standards from Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act..) and so are likely to assure a lower degree of user-experience than those conforming to the latest, finalized version of WCAG.

NOTE 3 Section 508 is in the process of being updated at the time of writing this British Standard....; it is expected that the updated version will be published in 2011.

AE&D: Accessibility, Equality & Diversity

For the purposes of this study, I have linked the two terms **Accessibility** and **Equality & Diversity** to coin the acronym: **AE&D**.

These terms are intrinsically linked and underpin one another. I would go so far as to say that you cannot have one without the other.

When examining **Accessibility** on recruitment websites, I have included the text-resizing controls: the **Adjustable Text Size symbol A A A** and the **Text only** link, which indicates how visitors can adjust other aspects of the site, as well as the more standardised **Accessibility** link.

The results of the screening exercise have been collated and summarised in the four sections that follow:

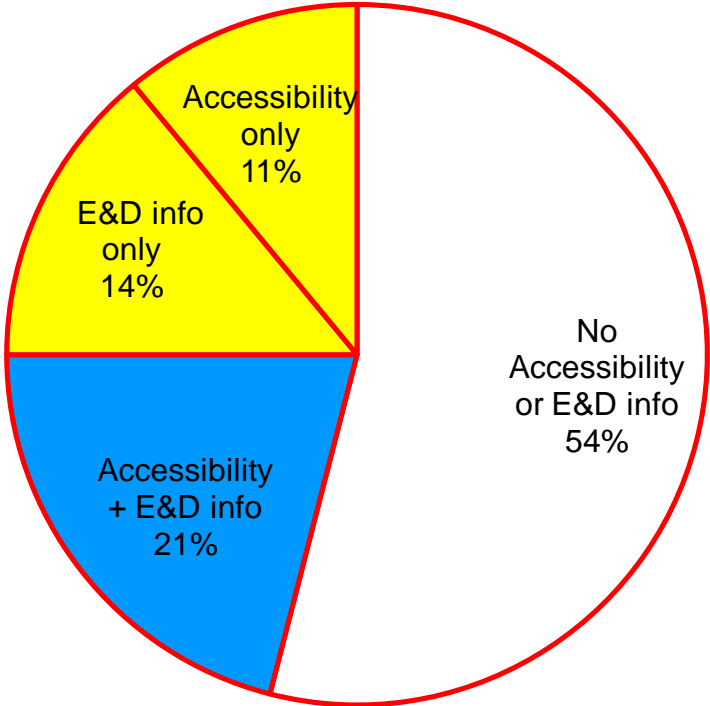
- 1 Website Accessibility and Equality/Diversity Information
- 2 Equality/Diversity Policies & Equality Legislation
- 3 How Approaches to Equality & Diversity are Demonstrated
- 4 Characteristics, Labels and Logos

RESULTS OF THE SCREENING EXERCISE

Section 1 Website Accessibility & Equality/Diversity Information

Figure 1

Website Accessibility & Equality/Diversity Information Provided on Recruitment Websites



All percentages provided in this document are in relation to the total number of 300 websites scrutinised during this exercise. Three main groups of recruitment organisations were identified by this study – those that appeared to:

- ignore Accessibility and Equality & Diversity (AE&D) **54%**
- make some attempt to recognise A or E&D or **25%**
- recognise the dual aspect of AE&D and acted accordingly **21%**

MORE THAN HALF (54%) of all recruitment websites contained NO Accessibility, Equality or Diversity (AE&D) information.

There was no indication that most of these websites had taken account of the international guidelines on Website Accessibility; none of the websites made any other mention of Equality & Diversity.

ONE TENTH (11%) of all sites provided links on their Home page entitled ‘Accessibility’, ‘Adjustable Text Size: AAA’ and/or ‘Text only’ but with no other Equality & Diversity information

BS 8878 suggests (p.20) that organisations should ensure that:

the accessibility statement itself is fully accessible to and usable by disabled people, even when other content on the site is not.

NOTE It is recommended that organizations link to this accessibility statement from all pages of the web product (usually by putting the link in the web product’s common page header or footer) and should name the link “Accessibility”.

ONE SEVENTH (14%) of all sites provided Equality & Diversity information but no Accessibility links

Even if these organisations displayed an interest in and commitment to E&D, this was weakened by their neglect of Accessibility features.

ONE FIFTH (21%) of all sites provided links on their Home page entitled ‘Accessibility’, ‘Adjustable Text Size: AAA’ and/or ‘Text only’ AND provided Equality & Diversity information

These sites also provided at least one other piece of information relating to Equality & Diversity, of the type described later in this report. Hence, these sites attempted to provide Accessibility and offer the visitor additional E&D information.

With regard to the WCAG guidelines:

- **2%** of all sites referred to the W3C initiative and the international guidelines
- **0.6%** included one or more of the W3C conformance logos

The logos provide an instant way for people who depend upon Accessible Websites to recognise one. Only **one** out of the 300 websites examined also provided a Website Accessibility Statement, which undoubtedly explains why there is such vast scope for improvement.

Other Aspects of Website Accessibility

Access Keys reference	2% of sites
------------------------------	--------------------

Access Keys allow you to move around a keyboard without using a mouse. Different browsers use access keys in different ways; normally you need to hold down a key or two, and then press the access key you want.

The UK government Access Keys Standard is as follows:

S - Skip navigation – this allows you to bypass the navigation areas and go directly to that page's main content. 0: Access key details 1: Home page 2: Newsroom 3: Site map 6: Help 7: Complaints 8: Terms & conditions 9: Feedback form

Accessibility/Equality/Diversity References at Top of Home Page	8% of sites
--	--------------------

Common practice appears to be to place them at the bottom of the Home page, which requires the visitor to scroll down the page to find them. If situated at the top, they are easier to find and have a more prominent place on the site.

Adjustable font size on Home Page	3% of sites
--	--------------------

Even if the site has other Accessibility, Adjustable Text Size: AAA and Text only links, the Home Page facility allows for quicker entry to the site and is also a good Equality indicator for other visitors.

Audio to accompany text	1% of sites
--------------------------------	--------------------

This is obviously a very poor take up, even if individual users may have their own systems set up for accessing websites.

Captions for video & other onsite material	0.3%
---	-------------

The low figure is unsurprising, given that the use of video material is still quite limited on recruitment websites. The main reason is undoubtedly cost, although it is a medium that is clearly better suited to some types of organisations than others. However, companies that have invested in video material should capitalise on their investment by using captions to reach the widest possible audience.

Section 2 Equality/Diversity Policies & Equality Legislation

The limited scope of this study meant that it was impossible to dissect the contents of the various policies referred to on some websites. This could be the focus of a future study when the recruitment profession has had the opportunity to consider and discuss the contents of this report.

I have focused mainly on the information that is more or less immediately available to all visitors to a site.

Equality/Diversity Policies	10% of all websites
------------------------------------	----------------------------

In addition to Equality and/or Diversity policies mentioned on 8% of websites, one can also add to this the **REC Diversity Pledge** cited by 2% of sites. The total is therefore 10%.

It is unsurprising that 54% of all sites have no mention of Equality & Diversity, if only 10% of companies indicate publicly that they have an Equality or Diversity Policy. Even when a website did mention a policy, these were not always immediately available; broken website links or – as was more commonly the case – the need to contact the organisation to receive a copy of the policy meant that policies were not always readily accessible. A pre-requisite for an E&D policy – demonstrating the link with Accessibility – should surely be that it is publicly available at all times.

It became clear during the website screening exercise that some organisations have a rather haphazard approach to AE&D. There was often little coherence between the various aspects of AE&D identified on some websites. Policies should therefore address this issue so that what a recruitment organisation says and does about AE&D are consistent.

For these reasons, I have serious reservations about the inclusion of the REC Diversity Pledge on sites that have not followed the W3C guidelines and provide no other Equality or Diversity information.

Another 2% of sites contain the REC Diversity Assured logos, which indicate that the organisations concerned have had a diversity ‘health check’.

However, there was sometimes no indication on some of these websites that they had been designed to be Accessible and some contained no other Equality & Diversity information. Even if these organisations consider themselves to be Equality ‘high fliers’, there is certainly not much evidence to support this on their websites.

3% of sites included a reference and/or links relevant to Equality Legislation, although unfortunately this was more often than not outdated.

1% mentioned the Equality Act 2010 with one link directly to the Act itself and two factsheets about or overviews of the relevance of the Act to recruiters.

One site mentioned the **Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC)**, the independent statutory body set up in October 2007 to help eliminate discrimination. Although there is a reasonable limit to which legislation should be quoted – these are recruitment and not legal websites, after all – providing references to the Equality Act 2010 and mentioning organisations such as EHRC creates the impression that the organisation has kept abreast of legal matters.

Providing updated legal information also strengthens the ability of a recruitment organisation to support the REC Memorandum of Understanding to:

- *Raise awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce by giving employers clear guidance and access to the widest range of people seeking work and*
- *Act as champions against discrimination and challenge unfair employment policies*

The British Standard explains (p. 42) that where an organisation is established in Great Britain (in most cases this means that it is registered with Companies House even if owned by foreign entities), the Equality Act applies to the provision of services in any state of the European Economic Area (EEA).

As explained earlier, references on recruitment websites such as legislation relevant to other countries is not always useful in the UK context.

Section 3 How Approaches to Equality & Diversity are Demonstrated

The first indicator that a recruitment organisation has taken seriously AE&D is an Accessible Website containing relevant Equality & Diversity information.

The second indicator is a publicly available E&D policy or statement that includes an Accessibility Statement and references to Equality Legislation.

There are additional more subtle signs that may indicate how an organisation perceives and approaches E&D. This is demonstrated by the positioning of relevant information – for those companies that have any at all! – within the structure of a website. It is not normally the webmaster who decides this but those responsible for organisational policy.

As will be seen from Figure 2 below, Equality & Diversity information on the websites examined appeared in the following locations:

- About us
- Work for us (internal recruitment)
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Application/Recruitment Procedures & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Our Culture/Dignity/Ethics/Values/Vision
- Information for recruiters/employers
- Committees/Groups

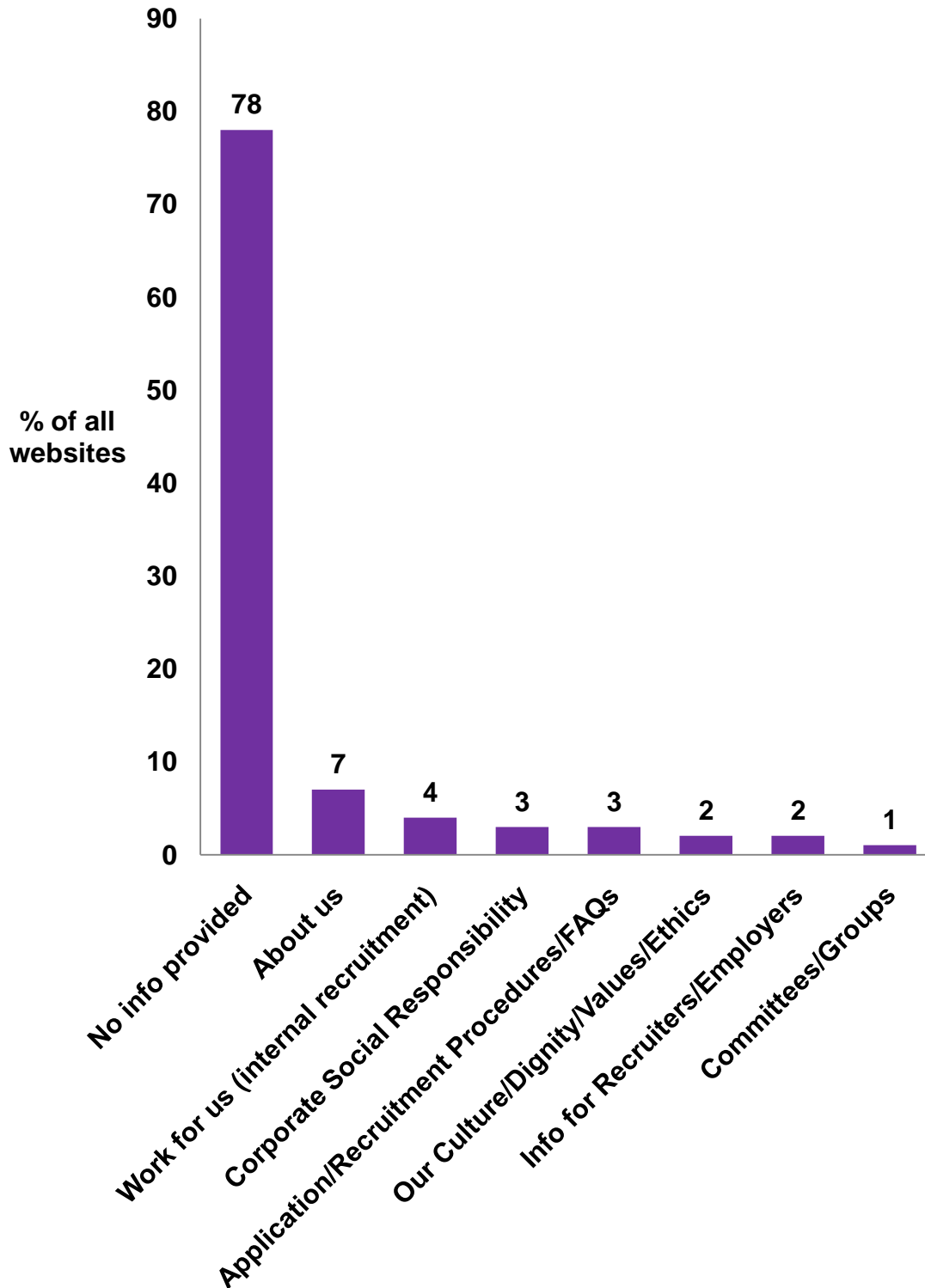
Even though it is up to each organisation to decide upon its own priorities, it is important that every target audience be considered when organising website content.

As the study has focused on recruitment organisations, it will be interesting to discover how many have included Equality & Diversity information in their Application/Recruitment Procedures and Frequently Asked Questions.

The expectation should be that the recruitment industry should excel in this respect – but do the findings reflect this? Figure 2 indicates the Location of Equality & Diversity Information on Recruitment Websites; the contents of the chart are explained on subsequent pages.

Figure 2

Location of Equality & Diversity Information on Recruitment Websites



About us	7% of all websites
-----------------	---------------------------

7% of websites located E&D information within the section 'About us'.

This demonstrates that an organisation believes that E&D is an integral part of its identity. However, visitors to some websites have to wade through extensive amounts of other information before finding anything relevant to Equality & Diversity.

Work for us	4% of all websites
--------------------	---------------------------

4% of sites included E&D information only within their 'Work for us' section, therefore aiming it only at the internal recruitment target audience and not at external candidates or clients. It would appear that these companies are aware of their legal Equality responsibilities only as employers.

Corporate Social Responsibility	3% of all websites
--	---------------------------

3% situated the information within 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)', which was usually located via the 'About us' link. In my view, this demonstrates an outdated attitude among recruitment firms and employers towards E&D.

The following extract from a briefing provided by a City commercial law firm illustrates why this might be so; as Lewis Silkin achieved Top 10 ranking in the legal profession's Diversity League Table in 2009, the firm is a highly credible source of advice on Equality & Diversity issues:

So how does CSR interact with the law?

Whilst it is difficult to divorce the concept of CSR from the law entirely, a pre-requisite of CSR is a willingness by organisations to look beyond their legal obligations and commercial focus to take account of social and environmental factors. CSR is therefore about going further than the law requires, rather than simply complying with it. That said, the law is obviously evolving all the time and as society develops the bar of minimum legal standards will inevitably rise. Today's CSR objectives may therefore become tomorrow's law. Anti-discrimination measures are a good example of the law catching up with CSR and raising the bar.

Corporate Social Responsibility Brief. Lewis Silkin LLP. London. March 2010.

Many of the 300 sites examined included details of various social and environmental projects with which companies were involved e.g. through charity fundraising. Whilst this is obviously commendable, it should not be a substitute for fulfilling legal obligations with regard to Accessibility, Equality & Diversity.

Only 3% of the 300 recruitment firms examined included some E&D information within their sections on Application and Recruitment Procedures or Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Surely, recruitment firms – the self-proclaimed experts, after all, on recruitment – should be giving a better lead to the UK’s employers. How will more people from diverse backgrounds and with different characteristics enter the employment marketplace if the procedures that should allow them to do so in fact exclude them?

BS8878 provides the following relevant ‘Scenario’ (p. 62):

David is dyslexic, understands almost instinctively how to build and fix computers, but is finding it hard to get a job as a computer engineer because his reading and writing skills are the “guilty secret” he hides. It is important that job websites enable him to have job descriptions read out to him so he can find the right job to apply for. It is also important that job websites include spell-check functionality in their job-application web-forms, or enable him to create his application in a word-processor using a spell and grammar check before uploading the finished document.

2% of firms placed E&D information within sections on their websites dealing with the organisation’s Culture/Dignity/Ethics/Values/Vision.

Although this may appear to be similar to CSR, it gives the impression that these firms have already incorporated E&D within their working practices rather than merely aspiring to do so. For larger firms in particular it can be helpful to give some history of the firm’s E&D activity e.g. dates of first policies, setting up of committees or working groups, as well as providing relevant statistics and case studies.

2% included E&D info only within sections aimed at Recruiters/Employers, with no information for Candidates.

Once again, this would appear to indicate that recruitment firms are aware of Equality Legislation relating to employees but have not recognised their own responsibilities towards candidates.

1% of firms made reference to various E&D Committees and Groups that had been set up either by the firm itself or by employees acting on their own initiative.

This applied more to employers as recruiters than to specialised recruitment firms. With a view to providing models for other organisations, it would be helpful if as much information as possible about the activities of such Committees and Groups were available to the public.

Section 4 Characteristics, Labels and Logos

The other key areas where knowledge of Equality & Diversity were demonstrated were in the ways in which recruitment companies made reference to the different types of Equality groups and/or E & D certifications.

Characteristics	8% of all websites
------------------------	---------------------------

Recruitment websites mentioned Equality groups according to the following Characteristics: Disability (5%), Age, Women (1% each), Ethnicity, Gender, Religion & Sexual Orientation (03.% each).

91.8% of sites examined did not refer to any Characteristics.

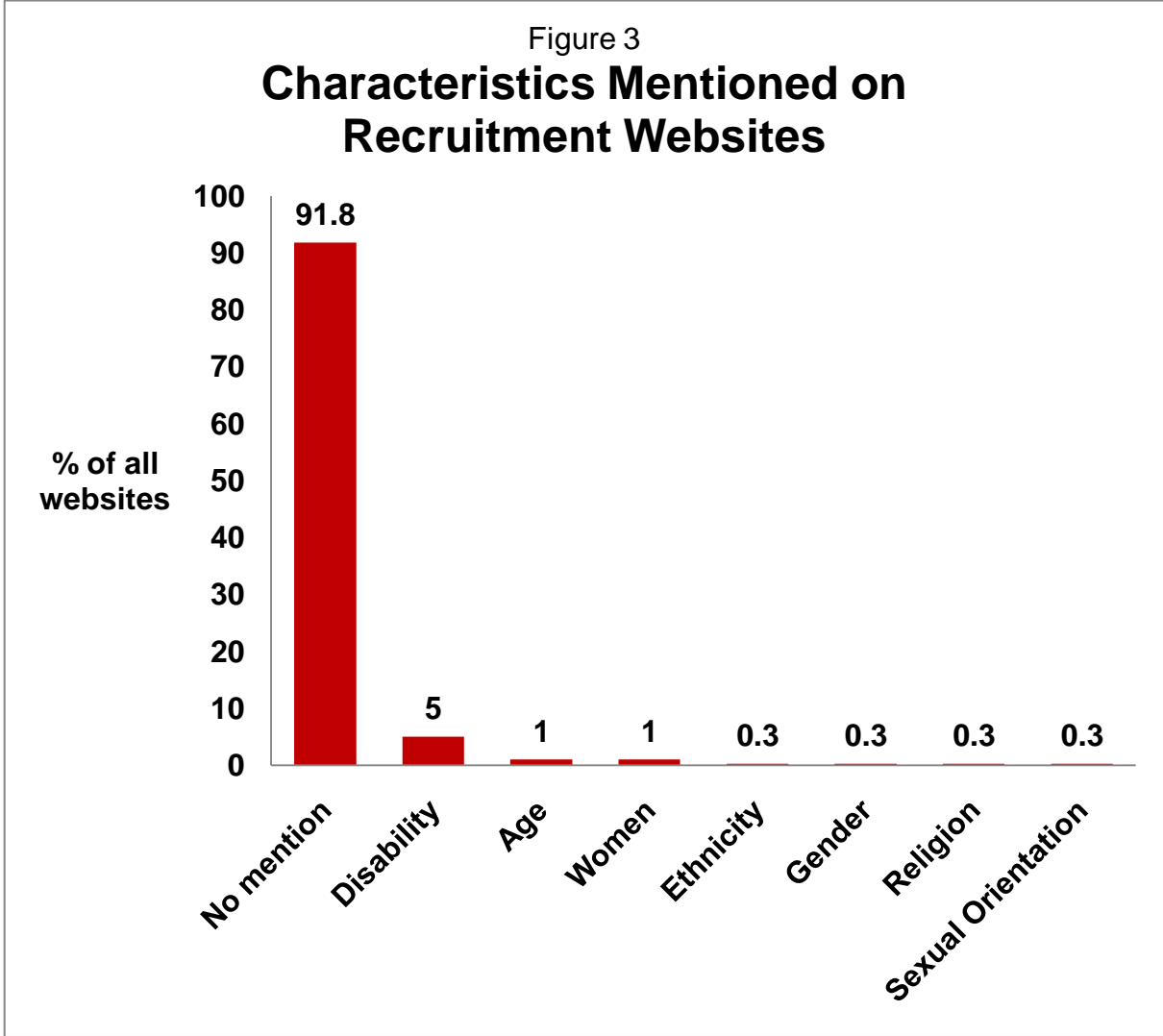
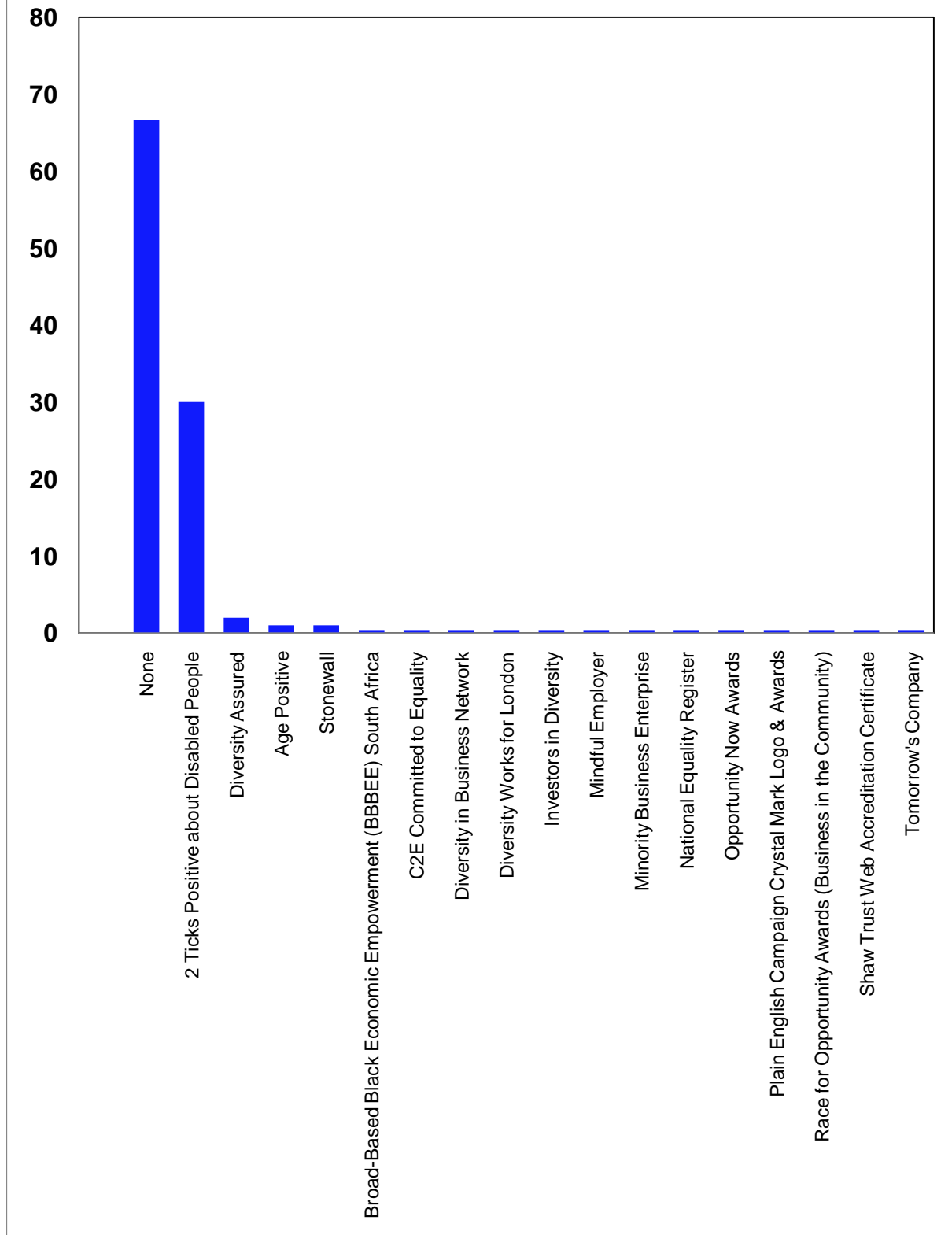


Figure 4 on the next page lists the Logos and Labels found on Recruitment Websites, with further details on the following page.

Figure 4
**Logos and Labels on
 Recruitment Websites**



ONE THIRD of all websites had Logos and Labels, with some sites having up to five each.

The exact percentages were as follows:

66.7%	No mention of any characteristics
30%	2 Ticks Positive about Disabled People Symbol
2%	Diversity Assured
1%	Age Positive
1%	Stonewall
0.3%	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) South Africa C2E committed to equality standard Diversity in Business network Diversity Works for London Investors in Diversity Mindful Employer Minority Business Enterprise National Equality Register Opportunity Now awards Plain English Campaign Crystal Mark logo & awards Race for Opportunity awards (Business in the community) Shaw Trust Web Accreditation Certificate Tomorrow's Company

There is clearly scope for standardisation so that comparisons could be made more easily between organisations.

CONCLUSION

Two other areas of difference could merit future exploration.

How do different types and sizes of recruitment organisations deal with Accessibility, Equality & Diversity on their websites?

Although this information was collected, I am currently unable to collate and summarise it due to time limitations. One might assume that larger organisations have greater resources and therefore can make a higher level of investment in Accessibility, Equality & Diversity. One might also reason that certain types of organisation might be more inclined towards AE&D due to the professional or occupational fields in which they operate.

Such assumptions were not always found to be correct.

Smaller organisations sometimes provided delightful surprises with their thoughtful treatment of the area; their larger national or multinational peers provoked occasional disappointment and disbelief at their thoughtless ignorance of AE&D.

How appropriate in this situation is the title of the 1970s book 'Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered'!

Size was not the only factor however; educational and health-related recruitment organisations that one might expect to be the AE&D Top Dogs sometimes gave a miserable performance within this study. By contrast, recruiters specialising in the construction industry sparkled with their demonstrable commitment to the spirit and the requirements of the Equality Act.

What impact could Specialised Equality Recruitment organisations have on Mainstream Recruiters?

Specialised Equality Recruitment organisations fly a very high flag to indicate to employers, recruiters and candidates that they offer a made-to-measure service linking people from the different Equality groups with suitable employers. To what extent could they help Mainstream Recruiters to improve the quality of their Accessibility, Equality & Diversity?

REFERENCES

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation Diversity Pledge

<<http://www.rec.uk.com/about-recruitment/diversity/diversity-signthepledge>>

Access all areas: Disability survey. BBC News website. 29 November 2010.

< <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11848338>>

Job market challenge for disabled. Gary O'Donoghue, Political Correspondent, BBC News. 30 November 2010.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11870703>>

Web accessibility – Code of practice. BS 8878:2010. British Standards Institution. November 2010.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11848338>>

Pushing the Boat Out: An introductory study of admissions to UK medical, dental & veterinary schools for applicants with disabilities. Tynan, A. (2003). LTSN-01 (the Learning and Teaching Support Network subject centre for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine). (Online) Available HTTP: <

<http://www.medev.ac.uk/static/uploads/resources/ptbo_final.pdf>

The Sequel to Pushing the Boat Out. Tynan, A. (2004). LTSN-01 (the Learning and Teaching Support Network subject centre for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine). (Online) Available HTTP:

<http://www.medev.ac.uk/static/uploads/resources/SR3_sequel_pushing_the_boat_out.pdf>

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation website – links to REC Code of Professional Practice

<<http://www.rec.uk.com/uploads/documents/1code-of-practice-2011-final-version.pdf>>

Code of Practice & Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

<<http://www.rec.uk.com/aboutrec>>

UK Recruiter Newsletter issue 484

http://www.ukrecruiter.co.uk/recnet/ukrecruiter_newsletter_484.html

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

http://www.w3.org/standards/techs/wcag#w3c_all

Corporate Social Responsibility Brief. Lewis Silkin LLP. London. March 2010.

http://www.lewissilkin.com/our_knowledge/knowledge_articles/Pages/Corporate%20Social%20Responsibility.1533.aspx

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Mervyn Dinnen, ranked in the Top 5 of the 2010 UK Recruiter Recruitment Blog of the Year and the unwitting catalyst for this study.

Thanks are also due to those who gave permission for material to be cited or who provided other assistance with this report. Inclusion in the Acknowledgements does not imply endorsement of or agreement with the contents of this report.

James Davies, Partner, Employment and Incentives, Lewis Silkin LLP

Tom Hadley, Director of Policy & Professional Services and
Alison Henderson AIRP, Press Manager, The Recruitment and Employment
Confederation

Raymond Pennie, Commercial Director, Kamanchi

Louise Triance, Editor, UK Recruiter Newsletter

Sally Wynn, Chartered MCIPD

Extracts and logos from the W3C website have been included in accordance with W3C usage policies.

Permission to reproduce extracts from *BS 8878:2010 Web accessibility Code of Practice* is granted by BSI.

British Standards can be obtained in PDF or hard copy formats from the BSI online shop: www.bsigroup.com/Shop or by contacting BSI Customer Services for hardcopies only: Tel: +44 (0)20 8996 9001, Email: cservices@bsigroup.com.

Anne Tynan
London, 25 January 2011

© 2011 Tynan Publishing

ISBN 978-0-9530430-1-9