



Briefing Note: Two Ticks or No Ticks? An Assessment of Two Ticks ‘Positive About Disabled People’ certification

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1) Introduction

The labour market disadvantage experienced by disabled people in the UK is both significant and enduring. This is reflected in an employment gap of approximately 30 percentage points,ⁱ and lower pay rates compared to non-disabled people (14 and 30 percent for physical and mental health respectively).ⁱⁱ There is also widespread evidence that disabled employees report lower work-related well-being than their non-disabled colleagues.ⁱⁱⁱ Seeking to address this disadvantage, the last two British governments have committed to increase significantly the proportion and number of disabled people in employment.^{iv}

A key government policy in attempting to increase the number of disabled people in employment has been to encourage more employers to sign-up to voluntary certification schemes (previously the Two Ticks ‘Positive About Disabled People’ scheme, and more recently its successor scheme – ‘Disability Confident’). The government believes that as more employers join such schemes it will ‘improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers’, ‘improve employee morale and commitment’, and help ‘customers and other businesses identify those employers who are committed to equality in the workplace’.^v

This briefing summarises the findings from two academic papers^{vi, vii} that test this argument by assessing whether the Two Ticks scheme was associated with: a higher proportion of disabled employees at the workplace; greater use of disability equality practices; improvements in disabled employees’ working lives; and enhanced workplace performance. These papers draw on data from the nationally representative government-sponsored Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS) 2011 (comprising linked employer-employee data on 2,680 employers and 21,981 employees), matched to the Department for Work and Pensions database of all 4,406 employers who had Two Ticks certification at that date. This enables identification of the workplaces (and of employees in workplaces) within the WERS survey that had Two Ticks certification. The analysis covers both the public and private sector.

2) The Two Ticks scheme

Launched in 1990, Two Ticks became a common and highly recognisable symbol on job advertisements, application forms and organisational websites in Britain. Certification awarded by JobCentre Plus was intended to help disabled job seekers identify employers that had made positive commitments regarding the management of disabled people within recruitment, training and retention processes, and had sought to raise disability awareness within their organisations.

The Two Ticks scheme was absorbed into Disability Confident in 2016, with 2,311 Two Ticks employers initially transferred across. There are some notable similarities between the two schemes. In particular, there is little independent monitoring to review whether employers meet the standards required of them (except for the 1.6 per cent of Disability Confident employers at Level 3), hence both are largely dependent on employer self-enforcement. Both schemes also focus on organizational processes and practices rather than requiring employers

to measure and increase the proportion of disabled employees within their workforce. Given these similarities, an analysis of Two Ticks is pertinent to understanding whether Disability Confident is likely to increase the number of disabled people in employment. In what follows, we summarise our research findings.

3) Two Ticks and Disability Employment

It might be anticipated that the proportion of disabled employees would be higher in Two Ticks than in non-Two Ticks workplaces, given the focus within Two Ticks on improving the recruitment and retention of disabled people. Regarding this, our analysis finds:^{vi}

- In 2011, the proportion of the workforce that was disabled within the private and public sectors was 8.8 per cent, and the proportion that was severely disabled^{viii} was 1.3 per cent.
- The proportion of the workforce that was either disabled or severely disabled was *no higher in Two Ticks than non-Two Ticks workplaces*.^{ix} This was the case in both the public and private sectors.

This suggests disabled job applicants had no greater chance of success in gaining employment with Two Ticks employers than with non-Two Ticks employers, and if they were successful, they were not necessarily any more likely to be retained.

It is possible, however, that increasing the proportion of disabled employees is a long-term aim that first requires employers to adopt a set of progressive disability equality practices that is likely to promote this outcome. Therefore, in the following section we consider whether Two Ticks employers were more likely to have adopted such practices.

4) Two Ticks and progressive disability equality practices

A starting point in seeking to promote disability equality is the adoption of a formal written disability equality policy. However, it is important formal written policy statements are backed up by disability equality practices, such as: monitoring and reviewing of recruitment, promotion and pay decisions by disability; special recruitment procedures to encourage applications from disabled people; and audits of workplace accessibility.

Given the commitments Two Ticks employers were expected to uphold regarding the management of disabled people, it is expected they would be more likely to have such disability equality policies and practices in place. Our analysis shows the following:^{vii}

- In 2011, 61.2 per cent of workplaces had a disability equality policy. There were no differences between Two Ticks and non-Two Ticks employers with regard to this.
- The uptake of disability equality practices was, in 2011, low across workplaces as a whole:
 - just 15.9 per cent of workplaces monitored recruitment by disability
 - just 7.4 per cent monitored promotions by disability
 - reviews of recruitment and selection procedures to identify indirect discrimination by disability were conducted in 15.5 per cent of workplaces
 - reviews of promotion procedures to identify indirect discrimination by disability were conducted in 8.6 per cent of workplaces
 - relative pay rates were reviewed by disability in just 2.9 per cent of workplaces.
 - just 7.4 per cent of workplaces had special recruitment procedures in place to encourage applications from disabled people

- formal assessments of the extent to which the workplace is accessible to employees or disabled job applicants had been conducted in less than half of workplaces (45.3 per cent)
- Where Two Ticks workplaces are concerned, they were more likely than non-Two Ticks workplaces to have adopted special recruitment procedures for disabled people. However, the uptake of the other disability equality practices was no higher in Two Ticks workplaces than in non-Two Ticks workplaces.^{ix}

As such, not only did Two Ticks employers not employ a higher proportion of disabled people, but only one of the seven practices outlined above that might help deliver this outcome in the long-run was more prevalent in Two Ticks than non-Two Ticks workplaces.

5) Two Ticks and disabled employees' experience of working life

The failure of many Two Ticks employers to adopt disability equality practices, as outlined above, suggests the experiences of disabled people were also unlikely to be better in Two Ticks workplaces than elsewhere. With regard to this, in this section we explore whether Two Ticks had a positive impact on ensuring reasonable job demands and sufficient job resources, work-life balance, appropriate skill utilisation, perceptions of fair treatment, well-being, and job satisfaction. Our results regarding this show:^{vi, x}

- Overall, disabled employees compared to non-disabled employees reported: greater time pressure and work intensity; lower job discretion; greater work-life conflict (work interference with life and life interference with work); greater skill underutilisation; poorer perceptions of fair treatment; lower well-being; and poorer job satisfaction.
- Disabled (and non-disabled) employees reported lower work interference with life in Two-Ticks workplaces than in non-Two Ticks workplaces. Other than this, there was no evidence that disabled employees in Two Ticks workplaces reported better outcomes than disabled people in non-Two Ticks workplaces.
- The disadvantage disabled employees experienced relative to non-disabled employees was no lower in Two Ticks than non-Two Ticks workplaces regarding: time pressure and work intensity; job discretion; work-life conflict; fair treatment; contentment; and job satisfaction. However, disabled employees reported higher skill under-utilisation than non-disabled employees in non-Two Ticks workplaces, but not in Two Ticks workplaces.

These findings show Two Ticks did very little to improve disabled employees' experience of working life. This is consistent with the findings reported above that Two Ticks workplaces were barely any more likely to have adopted the type of equality practices that have the potential to help such matters.

6) Labour turnover, labour productivity, and financial performance

It might be hoped that more employers would be attracted to schemes such as Two Ticks/ Disability Confident if they are associated with positive organisational outcomes including lower labour turnover, higher labour productivity and better financial performance. This is possible if the scheme helps employers draw from the widest possible talent pool and signals to employees, customers and other businesses that the organisation is committed to equality in the workplace.^v However, these outcomes are perhaps unlikely given the findings above that Two Ticks employers did not employ a higher proportion of disabled people, adopt progressive disability equality practices, or improve disabled people's working lives. Consistent with this, our analysis found labour turnover was no lower, while labour productivity and financial performance were no higher, in Two-Ticks than in non-Two Ticks workplaces.^{vi, ix}

7) Implications

Our results show Two Ticks was largely ineffective at increasing the proportion of disabled people at the workplace, encouraging the adoption of disability equality practices, improving disabled employees' working lives, or improving organisational performance. Given the similarities between Two Ticks and Disability Confident, there are few reasons to assume that Disability Confident will perform better. This has several implications:

- If disabled job seekers concentrate their job search activity on Disability Confident employers, it appears unlikely this will increase their employment prospects. We would advise disabled job-seekers and job search advisers (including JobCentre Plus) helping people move from benefits into work to ignore whether an employer is Disability Confident. Two Ticks employers did not employ a greater proportion of disabled people or provide them with a more positive in-work experience, and there are no reasons to assume Disability Confident will perform any better regarding this.
- Disability Confident employers who do employ a greater proportion of disabled people should be concerned that many other Disability Confident employers are likely failing to do so, as this casts doubt on the scheme's reputation and credibility.
- The potential for Disability Confident to help meet the government's commitment on increasing the number of disabled people in employment appears limited. Although the certification process has undergone revision, employers may become Disability Confident without employing an above-average proportion of disabled people (or even any disabled people), or adopting any disability equality practices. Thus, if Disability Confident is to succeed where Two Ticks failed, it requires the introduction of targets for the number of disabled people employed, with employers being required to report progress towards these targets.^{xi} It also requires the introduction of credible measurement and independent monitoring to ensure these targets are met.

ⁱ Jones M.K., & Wass, V. (2013). Understanding changing disability-related employment gaps in Britain 1998-2011. *Work, Employment and Society*, 27, 982-1003.

ⁱⁱ Longhi, S., Nicoletti, C., & Platt, L. (2012). Interpreting wage gaps of disabled men: The roles of productivity and of discrimination. *Southern Economic Journal*, 78, 931-953.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jones, M.K. (2016). Disability and perceptions of work and management. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 54, 83-113.

^{iv} See: <https://www.disabilityatwork.co.uk/research-areas/a-tale-of-two-commitments/>

^v <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>

^{vi} Hoque, K., Bacon, N., & Allen, D. (2019) Do non-competitive voluntary employment certifications have credible signalling effects? The UK government's Two Ticks 'Positive About Disabled People' certification. Paper for 34th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Washington, USA.

^{vii} Bacon, N., Hoque, K., & Allen, D. (2019) Assessing the credibility of diversity branding: The relationship between Two Ticks 'Positive About Disabled People' certification and disability equality practices in the private and public sectors. Paper in preparation for submission to the 79th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Boston, USA.

^{viii} Day-to-day activities 'limited a lot' for at least 12 months by a health problem or disability.

^{ix} The analysis includes the following workplace-level controls: organisational size (employees); log of workplace size (employees); single independent workplace; SIC major group; national ownership; workplace age; union recognition; public or private sector; region; proportion of workforce female, ethnic minority, aged 50 or over, part-time; proportion of workforce in each SOC major group.

^x The analysis includes the workplace-level controls outlined in ^{ix} plus the following individual level controls: SOC major group; weekly pay; marital status; age; job tenure; highest academic qualification; part-time, temporary or fixed-term contract; union membership; ethnicity; gender; dependent children.

^{xi} <https://www.disabilityatwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Disability@work-Measurement-Briefing-August-2018.pdf>