Executive overview Invisible Disabilities in the workplace

Purpose

To increase leadership capability and confidence in supporting colleagues with invisible disabilities—improving inclusion, performance, retention, and legal compliance.

Why This Matters

- An estimated **16m people** in the UK live with a disability; **80% are invisible** (e.g. neurodivergence, mental health conditions, chronic illness).

- Employees with invisible disabilities often experience **under-disclosure, burnout, and disengagement** due to stigma or lack of understanding.

- In the UK, failure to make **reasonable adjustments** exposes organisations to **legal, reputational, and talent risks** under the Equality Act 2010.

What the Workshop Covers (60 mins)

- What invisible disabilities are—and common workplace impacts
- Barriers created unintentionally by policies, behaviours, and culture
- Practical adjustments that cost little but make a big difference
- How managers can have safe, supportive conversations
- Leadership actions that build psychologically safe, high-performing teams

What Leaders Will Gain

- Clear understanding of legal and ethical responsibilities
- Practical actions leaders can model immediately
- Improved confidence in supporting employees without requiring disclosure
- Insight into how inclusive leadership drives productivity and retention

Business Impact

- Reduced absence and presenteeism
- Higher engagement and retention of diverse talent
- Stronger employer brand and ESG outcomes
- Reduced risk of grievances and tribunal claims

Key Takeaway

Supporting invisible disabilities is not a "reasonable adjustment Issue" alone—it is a **leadership capability** and a **business performance enabler.**

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Managers' Checklist: Supporting Invisible Disabilities

Awareness & Culture

- [ ] Assume disabilities may be invisible – avoid assumptions
- [ ] Use inclusive language and role-model openness
- [ ] Keep conversations confidential and respectful

Work Design & Flexibility

- [ ] Offer flexible hours, location, or pacing where possible
- [ ] Adjust workload during flare-ups or high-impact periods
- [ ] Allow breaks without scrutiny

Communication

- [x] Ask "What support would help you do your best work?"
- [x] Offer multiple ways to communicate (written, verbal, async)
- [x] Give clear instructions, priorities, and realistic deadlines

Adjustments (UK Context)

- [x] Discuss reasonable adjustments early (Equality Act 2010)
- [x] Trial adjustments and review regularly
- [x] Signpost to Access to Work and internal HR support

Team & Process

- [ ] Set clear norms around meetings, deadlines, and availability
- [ ] Make meetings accessible (agendas, notes, cameras optional)
- [ ] Challenge stigma or inappropriate behaviour promptly

Performance & Wellbeing

- [ ] Focus on outputs, not presenteeism
- [ ] Check in regularly without being intrusive
- [ ] Check in regularly without being intrusive

Final Check

- [x] Have I listened without judgement?
- [x] Have I documented and followed up agreed support?

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