



## Disability Employee & Business Resource Groups / Networks

Impact Report 2019



PurpleSpace

# Building disability confidence from the inside out

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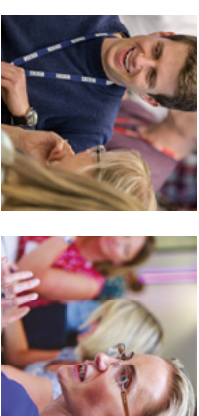
# Impact Report 2019

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In nations across the world, there are many versions of the expression **'nothing about us, without us.'**

It is a powerful expression used to convey the commonplace practice of excluding disabled people from the conversations that impact us the most such as healthcare, social care support, transport design, information technology design, in politics, and often in employment practice.

Employee resource groups / networks are a powerful vehicle to reverse that – and are fast becoming one of the most popular ways that employers are learning directly from their own people.



Established in 2015 PurpleSpace is a rapidly growing eco-system of 600 members across 100+ UK, multi-national and global employers. The community is made up of employee resource group leaders and committee members together with diversity and inclusion senior practitioners and senior champions / executive sponsors.

Together they are surfacing the lived experience of their own disabled employees. Together employers are learning directly from their own people about the ways they can improve employment policy, practice and procedure. Together, they are unlocking talent and changing the world.

Members share best practice, co-create projects of global importance and access a range of tools, techniques and leadership know-how in order to deliver high-impact employee resource groups / networks.

Membership fees and sponsorship income joint fund a unique range of tools, ideas and motivational learning and development themes to build disability confidence from the inside out.

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Creator & CEO, PurpleSpace**

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# Foreword

**Barclays is committed to creating opportunities for people of all abilities to rise. Developing a disability and mental health confident business is fundamental to this vision and our employee resource group plays a vital role.**

Reach, our disability and mental health network, is open to all colleagues who have a disability or mental health condition, or support those who do. It is dedicated to levelling the playing field for people of all abilities.

With a significant membership across the globe, it is a powerful community that helps drive change, for example through campaigns such as This is Me. Reach supports and mentors colleagues with a wide range of disabilities and mental health conditions, and helps the business to identify new ways of making our products, services and facilities accessible to everyone.

Our network coordinates listening groups so that the business can learn from the experiences of our disabled colleagues, and helps shape and promote our Workplace Adjustments Passport to support colleagues as they move through their careers. The network also engages our Reach Purple Champions - important allies in helping to build disability and mental health confidence.

Barclays is a proud member of PurpleSpace and we are delighted to sponsor the world's first impact report about the work of disabled employee networks / resource groups. We have seen firsthand how networks can create a sea-change in supporting our colleagues and enabling the business to better reflect the reality of our customer base.

I am confident that this report will support employers of all sizes through its findings and will strengthen the resource groups/networks who provide the passion and insight to help us all build disability and mental health confidence from the inside out.



**Paulette Cohen,**  
**Head of Diversity & Inclusion,**  
**Group HR, Barclays**



# Executive Summary

**This report is the world's first Impact Report about the work of disabled employee resource groups / networks.**

Between 21st October 2019 – 13th November 2019 we ran a simple on-line survey and invited employer members across the world to take part. 138 responses were received. In addition, we conducted 17 in-depth confidential interviews with employee resource group / network leaders and heads of diversity and inclusion teams.

This report summarises the key findings. All responses remain anonymous.

Launching an annual Impact Report is the latest development in our ongoing commitment to provide high-quality know-how and resources required to deliver high-performing disabled employee resource groups / networks.

During 2020 we will be inviting our partners and collaborators to share their feedback with us in order to reflect on the trends and identify our next priorities.



**Kate Nash OBE,**  
Creator & CEO, PurpleSpace



# Key findings

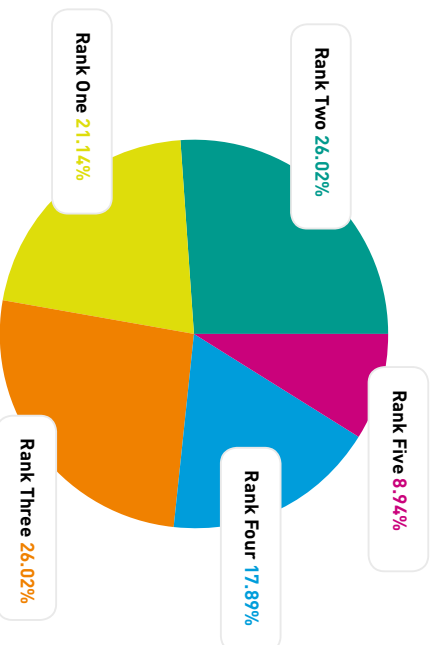
## Benefit 1:

### The greatest employer benefits of having a disability network / resource group

Prior to the survey, we identified 5 primary benefits of having a disability network / resource group. There are many more benefits, however for simplicity and to ensure local and global relevance, we offered the five most identified benefits expressed by our members during our interaction with them during 2019.

We asked survey respondents to rank these benefits with 1 being of the greatest importance and 5 being the least important.

#### The chance to offer feedback on workplace policies



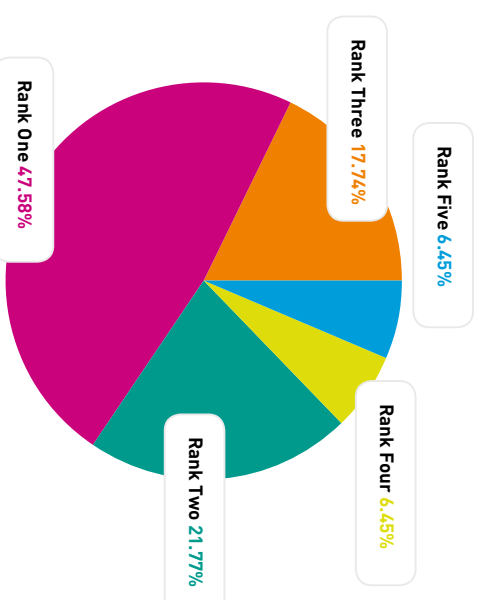
# 47.16%

of respondents ranked the chance to offer feedback on workplace policies as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group (ranked one and two).

# 8.94%

of respondents ranked this as least important (ranked five).

### The opportunity to 'normalise' disability and impairment across the workforce, as part of the human experience



# 69.35%

of respondents ranked the opportunity to 'normalise' disability and impairment across the workforce, as part of the human experience as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group (ranked one and two).

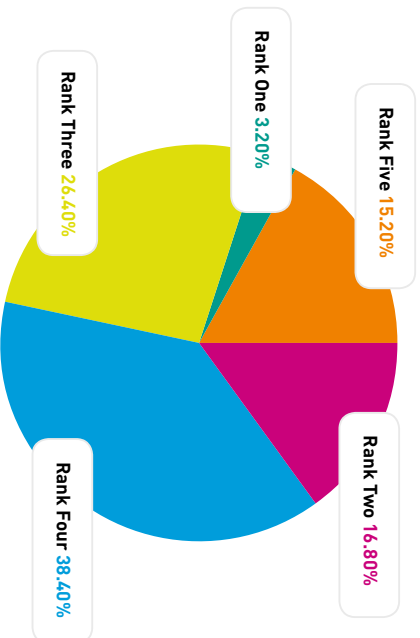
# 6.45%

of respondents ranked this as least important (ranked five).

## Benefit 2:

### Benefit 3:

The chance to input ideas as to how the organisation better serves its customers or wider stakeholders of 'end users'



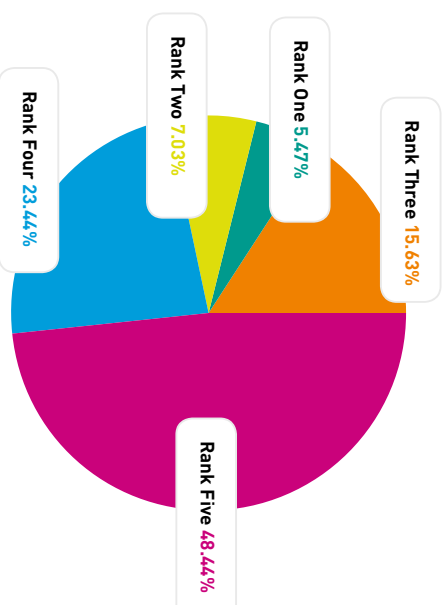
**Only 20%**

of respondents ranked the chance to input ideas as to how the organisation better serves its customers or wider stakeholders of 'end users' as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group (ranked one and two).

**53.60%**

of respondents ranked this as least important (ranked four and five).

A ready-made 'vehicle' to cascade messages of intent to build a more inclusive workplace for organisations that sign-up to the #Valuable 500 movement



**Only 12.50%**

of respondents ranked the benefit of having a network / resource group as having a ready-made 'vehicle' to cascade messages of intent to build a more inclusive workplace for organisations that sign-up to the Valuable 500 campaign (ranked one and two).

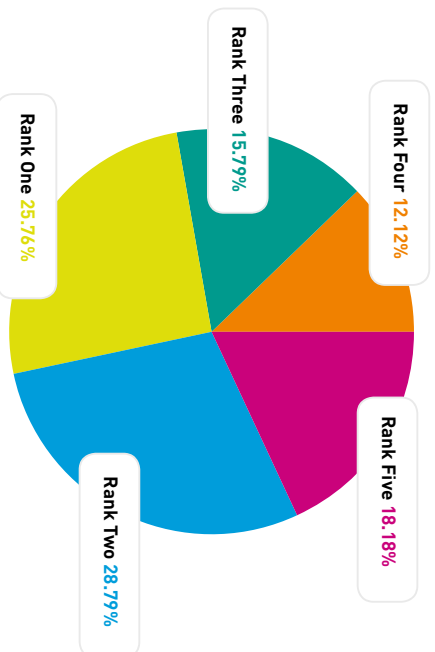
**71.88%**

of respondents ranked this as least important (ranked four and five).

### Benefit 4:

## Benefit 5:

An exciting way to make it easier for people with disability / ill health / sensory impairment / cognitive impairment / other impairment to feel less isolated and have the courage to ask for the workplace adjustments they may need



# 54.55%

of respondents ranked the role of the network / resource group as an exciting way to make it easier for people with disability / ill health / sensory impairment / cognitive impairment / other impairment to feel less isolated and have the courage to ask for the workplace adjustments they may need as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group (ranked one and two).

## Only 18%

of respondents ranked this as least important (ranked five).



**The most important  
outcomes networks /  
resource groups achieve**

**Prior to conducting the survey, we identified 3 primary types of 'outcome'. There are many more types of outcome, however for simplicity and to ensure local and global relevance, we offered the 3 key areas expressed by our members during our interaction with them during 2019.**

We asked survey respondents to describe, under each category the types of things they have achieved. In this summary we have 'clustered' the most frequently mentioned outcomes and outputs.

### **Outcome One: An activity / project**

115 responses were received. Some respondents cited multiple outcomes. Of these the five most frequently mentioned outcomes were:

**One:** Engagement with #PurpleLightUp / International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December as a central way to normalise disability / celebrate the economic contribution of disabled employees / join forces with others to build global community of change-makers (39 mentions)

**Two:** Participation in general awareness raising / "days of" (16 mentions)

**Three:** Developing recommendations about employment policy / staff surveys (14 mentions)

**Four:** Getting the network / resource group up and running (9 mentions)

**Five:** Introducing a Champions / Senior Engagement programme (6 mentions)



### **Outcome Two: Engagement with employees**

109 responses were received. Some respondents cited multiple outcomes. Of these the five most frequently mentioned outcomes were:

**One:** Supporting the organisation to review / improve the workplace adjustment process by rolling out communications to existing employees and / or supporting focus groups / engagement surveys (65 mentions)

**Two:** Creating or adapting in-house 'story-telling' campaigns (43 mentions)

**Three:** Helping recruitment teams review policy / practice by asking existing employees to offer feedback (15 mentions)

**Four:** Supporting the organisation to review data capture methods by improving language and communication about the purpose of monitoring (13 mentions)

**Five:** Seeking views about talent programmes / coaching programmes / mentoring programmes (10 mentions)

### **Outcome Three: Partnership with diversity and inclusion team**

111 responses were received. Some respondents cited multiple outcomes. Of these the five most frequently mentioned outcomes were:

**One:** Liasing / finding the right source of support for individual disabled employees facing challenges in identifying / sourcing the right workplace adjustment (30 mentions)

**Two:** Reviewing / offering feedback about the organisations overarching diversity / disability strategy and getting involved in external benchmark standards (20 mentions)

**Three:** Participating in discussions about ERG / network strategy that supports the overarching diversity / disability strategy (13 mentions)

**Four:** Ensuring a 'joined up' approach between different ERGs / networks and identify common projects & events (9 mentions)

**Five:** Seeding and feeding ideas about what other organisations are doing (6 mentions)

# The three biggest challenges

**We asked survey respondents to describe the three biggest challenges they have. We 'clustered' the most frequently mentioned challenges into three themes.**

- Finding enough voluntary time away from busy jobs and "competing" with the "noise" that happens in any organisation – or having "permission" from line managers to work on ERG / network activities;
- Being overwhelmed by too many individuals who need support to access the right workplace adjustments and feeling 'responsible' for handing cases over without losing sight of what happens next;
- Wanting to 'pass back' the responsibility of delivering an easy-to-use workplace adjustment process to the business / organisation without losing sight of the opportunity to input into process



**Why are organisations enjoying  
being part of the PurpleSpace  
community?**



**We asked survey respondents to describe what they enjoy about the PurpleSpace community in order we can better target our services and priorities.**

**We 'clustered' the most frequently mentioned items into three themes.**

- Articulating the lived experience of disabled employees in a way that has never been done before – and to highlight the trends across the employers' community about how we can better express and maximise the talent of disabled employees;
- Our positive 'tone' and 'style' – and our core belief that employers want to do best by their people so we can support our members positively when it can sometimes feel the opposite;
- Our leadership on #PurpleLightUp on 3rd December each year – creating and sustaining a new digital movement of pride amongst disabled employees together with our allies and champions.

**What else can PurpleSpace  
do to support networks /  
resource groups?**

## There were a range of different answers.

### The four key themes were:

- Continue to build the world's only network of disabled employee resource groups / networks to grow the community of change agents and partner with other external agencies and organisations including the ILO Global Business Disability Network and all employer networks around the world.
- Continue to build the 'bold' conversations and interventions that will support their own people to share their story of disability – and create a 'framework' of understanding about the universal truths (across geographies) about how to get on at work.
- Articulate the need to liberate resource groups / networks from having to spend too much time on "remedial" activities to 'fix' broken workplace adjustment processes / policies.
- Create and innovate when it comes to new tools to support individual disabled employees build inner confidence and resilience.
- Bring resource group leaders / network leaders around the world together in order to create best practice exchange.

*"PurpleSpace is the most successful organisation of its kind in the world that puts solutions (about) disability front and centre of conversation and not just highlight the problems that everyone knows about."*

*"We are involved with PurpleSpace to reach out and share best practice with other organisations, and to learn about conditions that we have not come across before and how to best make adjustments to support our colleagues."*

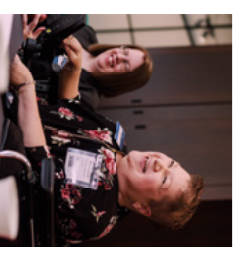
*"We have run disability awareness forums for executive leaders and managers that have radically changed the organisation's culture. There is a recognition that responsibility for staff with disability is every leader's business. We now have 40 champions and the number is growing."*

*"We doubled our ERG membership just by introducing the PurpleSpace tone and style into our culture."*

## Why do employees get involved in their organisation's network / resource group?

We asked survey respondents, in an open-ended question, why they were involved in their organisation's network / resource group or related activities. The responses largely fell into one of the following categories:

- **Self-fulfilment through the opportunity to influence change**
- **Wanting to create a better working world for disabled employees because of direct or other personal experience**
- **Wanting action from others / the organisation**



## Self-fulfilment and the opportunity to influence change

*"Leading our Disability Employee Network is my favourite part of the job. Network members are passionate about improving our workplace and I am excited about the opportunity to create positive change."*

*"I want to encourage management action on these issues."*

*"I am the executive sponsor to our network and have found huge reward in supporting and mentoring our network chair and learning about the experience of our disabled staff. As a board member this helps me use my influence to make things right for everyone."*

*"(As Maya Angelou said) People will forget what you did. People will forget what you said. People will never forget how you made them feel"*

*"It's the single most motivating and rewarding thing I've ever done at work and as a champion I highly recommend it."*

*"I want to make the biggest impact, a sustainable change to rehumanise our workforce so people can feel comfortable to bring their whole selves to work."*

*"The real question is why wouldn't you want to be involved?"*

## Wanting to create a better working world for disabled employees because of direct or other personal experience

*"I have a passion for helping people with a disability as I grew up with a father with physical disabilities and I have a son with mental health problems. I can see the big impact the work of our network has had over the last ten years."*

*"I have experienced first-hand what it's like to be taken less seriously than my peers. I want to shine a light on all of the talent that PWDs have so that those after have less to fight for."*

*"I know what it's like to feel isolated at work. That drives me to make sure others don't have to go through similar experiences and ensure that everyone's voice is heard."*

*"As a disabled person, I was born to be an activist, thus I am a part of my organisation's network. I can't change the world, but if I change my sphere of influence, the world will follow in time!"*

*"Because the (network) has backed me so much in the last 30+ years when adaptations have been required."*

*"Though I do not have a disability myself I have 3 children with various disabilities and so understand the challenges they may face in the workplace and obtaining employment, so want to help any provisions my own company is able to put in place."*

*"I don't need the world to revolve around me, I just need it to hear me."*

## Wanting action from others / the organisation

"I am passionate about breaking down employment barriers and holding our organisation accountable to enabling inclusive employment opportunities now and into the future."

"To improve work conditions and attitudes and barriers across the organisations that staff with a lived experience of a disability/medical condition face of every hour of every working day."

"Because it seems the best way to bring about change and HR teams often seem over stretched and unprepared."

"Policing is way behind the curve in terms of recognising disability as a protected characteristic and I felt compelled to highlight the value that disabled people bring to an organisation."

"Because I have felt HR expertise is lacking."

"To support to change cultures to allow purple talent to thrive."

"Disability is everyone's business and spreading awareness via the network will help life to be better for a great number of people. This is too important to keep at the D&I departmental level"

"To bring about a greater sense of community and improve the experience and confidence of those joining the firm who have got a disability."



# Key trends

**In addition to the on-line survey we also conducted 17 in-depth interviews with resource group / network leaders to expand on some of the points raised in the survey. They were from the UK as well as large multi-national and global companies.**

**This is what we found:**

**100%** were involved in stimulating authentic story-telling campaigns (and they see this as the greatest cultural driver)

**100%** were required / expected to comment on or review the internal workplace adjustment process (and while all welcomed this, most would like to be less involved and spend more time on career development activities for their members)

**100%** have been invited to offer feedback on the organisation's disability / diversity strategy (and see this as a critical component of the resource group / network role)

**75%** say they have good or excellent relationship with their Diversity & Inclusion team, where they have one (the biggest criticism being some perception they are 'last on the list')

**60%** have taken part in the global #PurpleLightUp movement on 3rd December (with a further 20% looking to do so)

**50%** have been invited to offer feedback on product and / or service design (and welcome this but not as a core activity)

**100%** welcome the #Valuable 500 campaign (with those for whom it impacts seeing significantly spiked interest in the resource group / network from the CEO / senior execs)

**25%** say they have an active / engaged champion (and the rest would like advice on how to change that)

**80%** say they would like to spend more time / have more resources for "self-actualising" activities with their members (such as developing mentoring, coaching, personal development programmes)



# Afterword

In 2019 PurpleSpace introduced the concept of a 3-stage "life-cycle" approach to employee resource group / network development.

- **Starting Out**
- **Stepping Up**
- **Thriving and Innovating**

We have much more work to do on the concept though reading the responses to our survey it seems clear that many ERGs / networks are already noticing the opportunity they have to grow, mature and to focus on the key activities that drive cultural change.

Our mission at PurpleSpace is simple – we call out the challenges that disabled employees face – and we offer best practice and advice about how to build successful ERGs / networks to support an organisation to resolve those challenges and realise talent. That's our focus – and while there will always be socio-cultural, political and legislative differences across the world there are more and more opportunities to notice the universal truths that impact on our lives – and the solutions that will unlock talent.

This year we have partnered with many organisations who are similarly driving cultural change. And through the collective efforts of so many, such as our partners at #Valuable, the ILO Global Business Disability Network, country specific employer networks, disabled-led disability rights organisations I sense a tipping point is coming.

At PurpleSpace we work to a higher purpose – to enable all of us to anticipate, accommodate and celebrate human difference in our working worlds. We look forward to working with even more partners and members to make that happen.

Our thanks to Barclays for sponsoring the first of our Impact Reports.




**Kate Nash OBE,**  
**Creator & CEO, PurpleSpace**





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