



Disabled people and work

What employers need to know

Disabled people and work

The University of Sheffield, School and Education and Youth Employment UK have been working together to raise employers' awareness of and confidence in employing disabled young people. This project follows on from a wider research project focused on employment in the lives of people with learning disabilities (<http://bit.ly/BigSocietySheff>)

The disability employment gap has remained a tricky problem for successive governments. Currently, the employment rate for disabled people in the UK is 50.7% (compared to 81% for non-disabled people). Worse still, only 5.9% of people with learning disabilities are in employment.



The causes of the disability employment gap for disabled young people include:

- a lack for support to prepare young disabled people for employment, including adults around young people having low aspirations;
- a complex benefit system that can deter disabled young people and their families from thinking about employment
- inflexible workplaces
- hostile work cultures where it is difficult to ask for reasonable adjustments

Employers also see barriers to employing disabled young people. These include:

- their fear of getting it wrong/saying the wrong thing with a young person
- a lack of access to clear information
- the fear that they will incur extra costs
- worries that employing a disabled person will take more time
- worries that if the job doesn't work out for the young person, the employer might be vulnerable to legal action
- lack of support systems within SMEs but also larger employers.

Of course, the law offers protections for disabled workers that employees must adhere to under the Equality Act, 2010. Employers must not discriminate against disabled employees at any stage of the process, from recruitment to redundancy. Employers must make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled employees. Failure to do so is the biggest cause of workplace discrimination.

There is often confusion about what counts as a 'reasonable adjustment'. Often people think about physical access like ramps but reasonable adjustments can include a whole host of accommodations including:

- flexible working patterns
- mentorship
- specialist equipment e.g.: speech recognition software or a standing desk

As well as being unaware of their legal duties, employers are also sometimes unaware of the strong business case for employing disabled people. This includes:

- research evidence that demonstrates that disabled people make reliable, punctual and talented employees
- research that demonstrates that once an employer has employed a disabled person they are likely to do so again
- adjustments for disabled people can often have benefits for all employees
- supporting people with disabilities to live more independently is associated with lower overall costs to the state.

Employers often want top tips for working with disabled people. This problem with this approach is that every disabled person, regardless of their disability, is different from everyone else - after all, everyone is unique. So, our top tip is that you talk to the disabled employee in order to find out what adjustments they need to make the workplace accessible to them.

A good workplace for disabled people is a good workplace for all. Some common features of an accessible workplace include:

- an open environment where employees are listened to;
- an environment where employers are proactively seeking employees' views;
- an environment where information is shared clearly and accessibly
- an environment which is physically accessible to all

Good Practices



1.

Gamuda

Gamuda, a large construction company in Kuala Lumpur, committed to ensuring that 1% of the employees would be people with autism. They trained their existing staff to support colleagues and adopted 'circles of support' to support employees with autism (<http://bit.ly/Gamuda2015>).

2.

Self-Advocacy Organisations

These user led organisations such as Sunderland People First and My Life My Choice provide support for people with learning disabilities as well as delivering training and consultancy to other organisations. They can be accessible places to work as they make provisions such as working interviews (in which someone works in an organisation rather than sitting a verbal interview), they produce materials for employees in accessible formats and work alongside people with disabilities to ensure their needs and experiences are at the forefront of the work the organisations do.



3.

Supported Internships

Supported internships are a structured study based programme offered in partnership between an education provider and an employer for young people aged 16-24 who have an Education Health and Care Plan. The programme lasts for a minimum of six months and the aim is for young people to take up paid work at the end of the programme with the support of a job coach.

4.

Job Coaching

Utilising job coaches has been proved to be successful in supporting people to find and stay in work by building good relationships with both the disabled person and the employer. They can offer onsite training, support employers to deal with difficult situations and deliver training to other employees. Job coaches now need to need to adhere to National Occupational Standards including

- *enable prospective job seekers to raise their aspirations for work*
- *working with job seekers to develop and agree development plans that meets their employment, personal and financial needs.*
- *engaging with employers to enable them to understand the benefits of developing processes and practices to recruit and retain a diverse workforce*

Information about these are available in the Further Information section on Page 4.





Support available to disabled employees

Benefits

Employees in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) can undertake some paid or unpaid work while claiming. This is defined as 'permitted work', or 'supported permitted work'.

An employee doing permitted work can do any role as long as they work part time (no more than 16 hours per week). Employees can be in either the support group or the work-related activity group and still do permitted work. Employees about to start permitted work, need to fill in the permitted work form and return this to the JobCentre Plus office that pays their ESA.

'Supported permitted work' is classed as either:

- *supervised by someone from a local council or voluntary organisation whose job it is to arrange work for disabled people*
- *part of a treatment programme under medical supervision*

How much an employee is able to earn on either permitted or supported permitted will vary so employees should find this out from the Jobcentre Plus before starting work.

Access to Work

Access to Work is a grant that helps disabled people find and stay in work. It is the disabled person who applies for the grant but can complete the application with support from their employer. It can be used to help someone return to work.

The eligibility criteria is that the person must:

- *have a disability or health condition (physical or mental) that makes it hard for them to do parts of their job or get to and from work*
- *be 16 or over*
- *live in England, Scotland or Wales - there's a different system in Northern Ireland*
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The person needs a paid job, or be about to start or return to one. A paid job includes:

- *an apprenticeship*
- *a work trial or work experience*
- *an internship.*

Someone can claim for Access to Work while on ESA if they are doing permitted work.

Access to Work can be used for any support they need in the workplace including:

- *aids and adaptations*
- *communication support and*
- *to develop a mental health action plan*

Further information plus a link to the application form can be found on the left hand side.

Further Information

[ACAS Myth busting for Employers](#)

[Access to Work Factsheet](#)

[Access to Work webpage](#)

[British Association of Supported Employment](#)

[CAB Advice about ESA](#)

[CIPD Disability and Employment Factsheets](#)

[Disability Confident Scheme](#)

[DWP Guide for Line Managers](#)

[Enable \(Supported Employment charity\)](#)

[Job Coaching Standards](#)

[Mencap Resources for Employers](#)

[Northern Ireland Employment Support Information](#)

[Permitted Work form and information](#)

[Supported Internships](#)

If you have any questions or feedback about this handout please contact Rachael on Rachael.black@sheffield.ac.uk