

Reasonable adjustments

HR departments can advise you about both reasonable adjustments and Access to Work as ways to support the disabled staff you line manage.

What is a reasonable adjustment?

Reasonable adjustments are required by law under the Equality Act 2010. A reasonable adjustment is any change in the workplace which ensures that disabled staff, or staff with learning difficulties/ disabilities (LDD), are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their job. These changes can be made to the physical environment, the employee's working conditions or hours, to the organisation's policies, or provide any additional equipment or support needed.

How much do reasonable adjustments cost?

Many reasonable adjustments are free, such as magnification software, or inexpensive. Reasonable adjustments, such as specialist software, cost more but are worth it for the increase in productivity.

Access to work

Access to Work is a free government scheme which reimburses the costs of equipment, adaptations or support worker services to support disabled members of staff and those with LDD to take up or stay in work. Access to Work can fund up to £59,200 per staff member.

Examples of what Access to Work reimbursement could include:

- magnification software

- travel to and from work if this would otherwise be a barrier to employment.

What is the difference between a reasonable adjustment and access to work?

Access to Work is a government grant scheme which reimburses individuals for adjustments which are more specialised or may not have been reasonable in the circumstances and cost up to asset value per year.

Access to Work cannot pay for reasonable adjustments which should be provided by the employer.

In this video, we follow the story of Paul Belk, payroll officer at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. We learn about the reasonable adjustments the organisation has put in place to support him as a wheelchair user with a neurological condition at work.

Examples of reasonable adjustments

The reasonable adjustments listed below are examples of ways to make changes for disabled staff/staff with LDD. This is not a complete list and we would always recommend having an ongoing discussion about what would be useful for each individual, as people with similar conditions or disabilities may need different adjustments. Some of these may be provided by individual organisations, or through Access to Work.

Hearing impairment

appropriate to re-allocate any telephone tasks to colleagues.

- Holding meetings in quiet spaces – ensuring that there is minimal background noise can support someone with a hearing impairment to fully participate in a meeting.
- Accommodating a sign language interpreter, by including an extra chair in meetings.

Visual impairment

- Providing information in a variety of formats – for example in large text or audio – may be a useful way for someone with a visual impairment to receive information.
- For electronic documents, ensuring that it can be read by a text-to-speech reader can help someone with a visual impairment to access information.

Wheelchair mobility

- Providing a height adjustable desk allows employees to make the desk right
- for them and their wheelchair.
- Relocating someone's workstation to the ground floor – for some people it
- is not possible to access other floors, so this can help them to access
- the workplace.
- Widening doorways or rearranging office furniture for better access – in some
- buildings it is possible to widen doorways to allow access for a wheelchair

- Allocating a designated car space near the building.
- Re-allocating tasks to colleagues, such as a task which requires travelling
- over uneven ground.

Anxiety

- Providing a fixed desk– for some people having their own desk will help them to be less anxious than if they were hot desking.
- Altered or flexible working hours can be helpful if an employee finds commuting during peak hour stressful.

Chronic or episodic conditions, for example multiple sclerosis or chronic fatigue syndrome

- Modifying sickness absence processes to discount disability-related absence.
- Allowing employees to work from home during flare ups or more difficult days.
- Providing a quiet, dimly lit space for employees to take a break in or work in can prevent sensory overload.
- Allowing employees to work while wearing noise-cancelling headphones, or using other sensory aids, can prevent sensory overload.
- Providing the flexibility for the employee to work from home so they can control their environment.

Learning difficulties and disabilities

difficulties and disabilities can access the information they need.

- Allowing more time to explain tasks or to give feedback can support employees with a learning difficulty or disability to successfully complete tasks.

This video features occupational therapist, Naomi Miller, who has severe dyslexia. Filmed at East London Foundation Trust, we find out how adjustments to Naomi's shift pattern and ways of working support her to deliver excellent patient care.