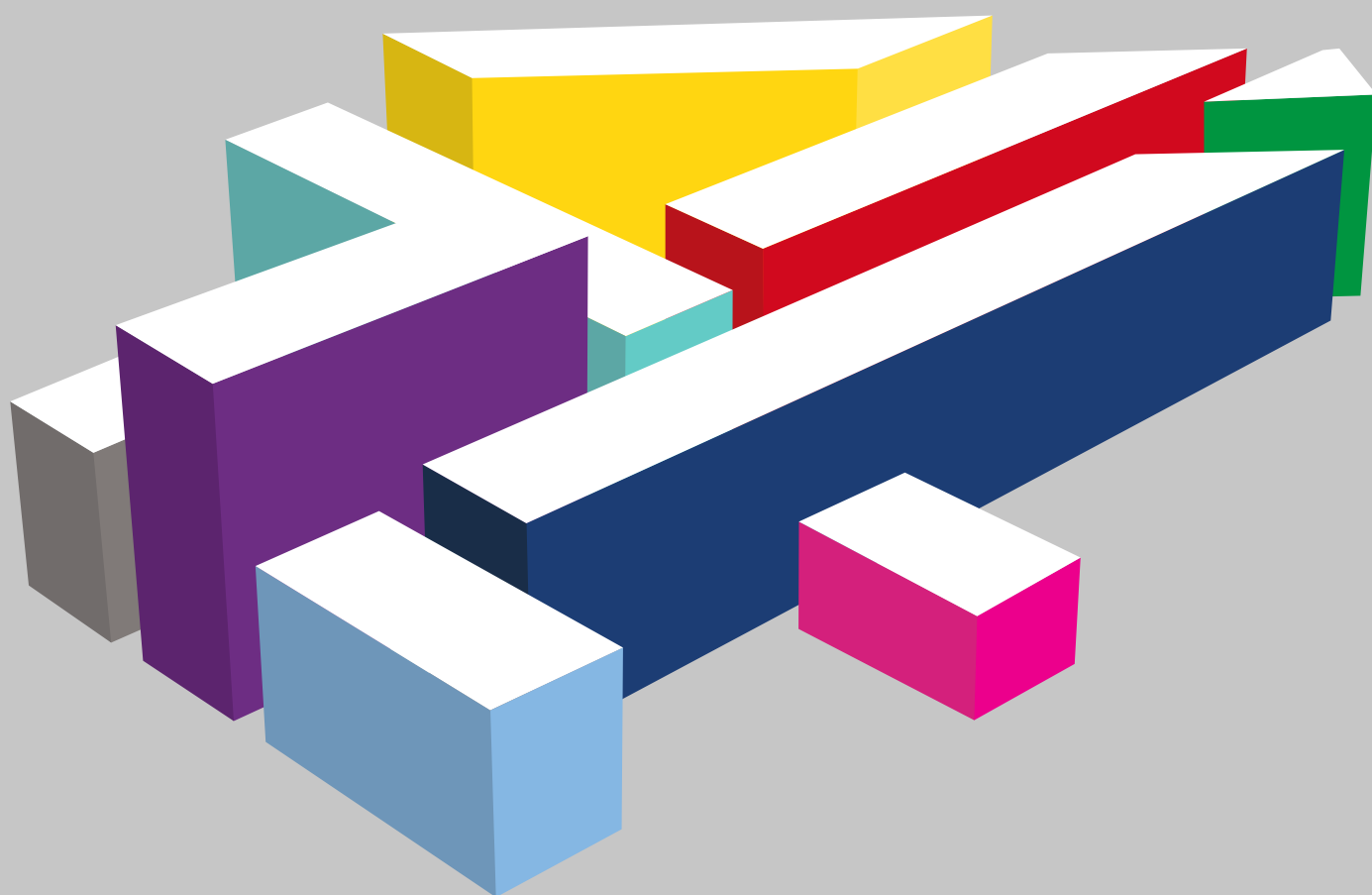


# Employing Disabled Talent

A guide for the TV sector



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Version: 1.0  
Date: 8th Feb 2018

Please contact us via [disability@channel4.co.uk](mailto:disability@channel4.co.uk) if you'd like this in an alternative format such as braille, large print or audio.

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# 1 Foreword

## 1.1 Dan Brooke, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer & board champion for diversity, Channel 4

In 2012 Channel 4 was unique among Paralympic broadcasters across the world in having disabled people on its team for London 2012, on and off screen. Roll forward 4 years to Rio 2016 and every single broadcaster on earth had disabled people working on and off screen.

What changed? Not the availability of the disabled talent on the market or its desire to work in TV. Instead Channel 4 demonstrated that given the opportunity disabled people can play a valuable role in the TV industry and, in doing so, will bring stories with a fresh perspective to our screens.

The representation of disabled people in our industry is still woefully low. However, no-one gets up in the morning and thinks, 'I really must stop disabled people getting jobs today'. The fact is it's not until you proactively ask people to interview disabled candidates that you start to understand the challenges they face.

That is why I commissioned the creation of this guide to employing disabled people in the TV sector; we want to help our partners and suppliers understand the value to be had in employing disabled people and give them practical guidance to help them feel more confident in doing so.

As the first media company in the UK to achieve the top level of "Leader" under the Government's Disability Confident scheme, we are striving to set the best example we can.



## 1.2 Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE, non-executive director, Channel 4

We are living in a time of unparalleled change and possibility, even if it doesn't always feel like it!

The fourth industrial revolution offers transformational opportunities for every individual and aspect of our society. Disabled people, it could be argued, with the greatest to gain. I never cease to be amazed by how technology is shifting the landscape for disabled people. Advances in prosthetics, wheelchairs, wearable tech and bionics are giving disabled people life choices simply unimaginable in the past, but ironically we are still being left behind when it comes to getting into and staying in employment; in the first quarter of the 21st century it is simply unacceptable that disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people.

The London 2012 Paralympic Games, the games of the possible, demonstrated what could be achieved in terms of changing attitudes towards and opportunities for disabled people. Significant attitudinal shift was achieved from London 2012, but the danger is, without everyone playing their part, these gains have the potential to slow or even worse to slip.

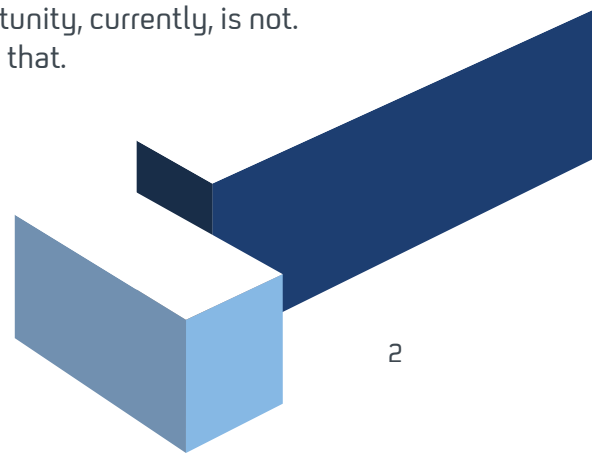
We know that myths about disability, along with unspoken fears and sometimes even prejudice and discrimination are holding employers back from employing more disabled people. These myths and fears must be challenged, the value of all talent appreciated and the employment gap closed.

The TV sector has a pivotal role to play in this; more disabled people working in TV must give us a better chance of getting more disabled people on TV. This in turn will help change perceptions about disability, challenge assumptions about what disabled people can and cannot do, and, ultimately, improve employment prospects across the piece.



I am therefore delighted that Channel 4 has commissioned this guide that provides a one-stop-shop of advice and guidance on employing disabled people. Please read, digest and take action – don't miss out on the wealth of talent that's out there, and play your part in changing the landscape for disabled people in the TV sector.

We all have a role to play in addressing the terrible fact that talent is everywhere whilst opportunity, currently, is not. Let's change that.



## 2 Why you need to read this guide

### 2.1 Unintended consequences

Suppose you're recruiting for a Producer Director. You find a person who is just what you're looking for – they're a perfect fit in terms of portfolio or CV, they've got the right skills and they really 'get' the tone of the series that's been commissioned.

You take them on and find that it's not all roses; yes, they're great but they've got an impairment or condition that makes some things awkward for them, maybe like self-shooting footage. So you regretfully have to let them go because, in your view, they can't do the job.

Who loses?

Everybody.

Why?

Because, for the want of asking the right questions at interview and then working with the PD to understand the support they need:

- the PD loses their job
- the production company takes a hit on time and cost of replacing them
- the show loses the perspective of a unique story teller
- other disabled people become even more scared of telling people they're disabled
- and society loses out because yet another disabled person is unemployed

There is also the very real risk of the production company being sued by the disabled person under the Equality Act, for which there are no limits on financial compensation and the reputational damage can be equally harmful.

It doesn't have to be this way and this guide will help make sure it isn't.

### 2.2 Get a fresh perspective and different talent

Hiring people you've worked with in the past is safe, quick and easy. But familiarity comes at the cost of uniformity; how can you create fresh, innovative standout TV if you're always hiring the same people?

Different people will have different skills with different insights and ideas. They will have different life experiences and different perspectives. They will tell different stories and make different TV shows. And some people are different because they are disabled.

Channel 4 has had a duty to reflect difference since its inception, the other broadcasters are now equally committed, so continue hiring the same people at your peril.



## 2.3 Meet a couple of different people

### Emily Saunders-Madden, Researcher, Twenty Twenty

I had my first TV job writing subtitles for my local newsroom as a teenager, then did a double arts degree, and travelled the world. But it wasn't until the rise of disability initiatives that I truly believed I could 'make it' in such a physically demanding industry. Despite all my passion, intelligence, and relevant work history, I need occasional support to excel.

For me, initiatives like this guide present a much-needed opportunity not to explain all of the tiny things I might struggle with, but highlight the extraordinary skills having Cerebral Palsy has given me: I'm articulate, adaptable, and great at 'thinking outside the box'. My impressive memory for the written word, my resourcefulness, and my willingness to 'just get stuck in' are all attributes acquired directly because I have always thought every action through, learnt as much as possible to think my way around energy conservation, and overcome the small obstacles in daily life. I think that the determination to excel and live life to its fullest is something exponentially present in people living with disability.

In 2015 I joined the BBC on their Extend Scheme – beating over 250 hand-selected candidates for my position as a researcher. It was, like most roles in this industry, a mix of hard work, adaptability, and more than a little persistence. Upon realising my position had to remain fixed term, I made the leap and moved to London. I found freelance work with various Channel 4 commissions. I joined Talkback (part of Fremantle media) as a junior researcher then, eventually, another longer-term position with Twenty Twenty's First Dates.

The biggest piece of advice I can give is TALK. The conversation about exactly how my condition affects me is difficult – it can be embarrassing and frustrating. Disability is not a subject that is filled with positive language, iconic heroes, or empowered communities.

It is particularly difficult to admit when I'm struggling because I'm so used to just getting on with things, so finding a person in both a position to help and that you're comfortable talking to is key.

Go in with the positives, but be prepared to discuss the negatives. It's only by everyone having a whole picture of somebody's needs can these become a non-issue. Remember: We are all human.



## **Richard Bentley, Creative Director, Postcard Productions**

I have worked within the industry for 15 years, and am now an executive producer at Postcard Productions, a company I established in 2010. I have experienced symptoms of OCD since childhood, and was formally diagnosed at 25 whilst working as a producer at an indie.

Looking back, I think the moment to moment existence of being a freelancer, constantly having to think about your professional reputation in an environment with high staff turnover and time pressures, made talking about my OCD never seem like an option, although sometimes it could be hard to hide from colleagues. I never took a day off sick, and if anything I think my OCD may have increased my work productivity as losing myself in work could be a distraction from my anxiety, but there is no doubt being in high pressure work environment could make my symptoms more distressing, which impacted on my overall wellbeing and personal happiness.

Now I run my own business, the pressure of that can sometimes exacerbate my symptoms but the reward and freedom, and having supportive colleagues that understand the realities of OCD and its impact, has been really valuable. I think my experience with OCD may have contributed to the kind of content we now specialise in; human interest stories of challenge and triumph.

A tool we have found useful for building relationships with staff are WRAPS (Wellness Recovery Action Plans). They give us the head up on issues which may be a problem, and if used widely could be an effective way of increasing openness, reducing stigma in work culture and recognising that we all struggle from time to time. Talking openly about mental health difficulties is actually a preventative measure, which as an employer I feel will ultimately increase productivity and wellbeing for everyone.





## 3 What do we mean by 'disability'?

### 3.1 The legal view

To paraphrase the UK's Equality Act 2010, a disability is a physical or mental condition that is long-lasting and has a substantial adverse effect on day-to-day activities.

"Long-lasting" generally means longer than 12 months or likely to recur, "day-to-day activities" are things like walking, manual dexterity, speaking, reading, writing, and interacting with people. "Substantial" means non-trivial (no kidding, that's what the law says).

"Physical or mental condition" covers a vast range of conditions including the things we normally think of as a 'disability' (such as being blind, being deaf, not being able to use one's legs) as well as things that we might not think of, such as dyslexia, diabetes, mental illness and cancer.

That's about as helpful as the legal definition gets.

Here's a big tip:

Don't bother with the legal definition because it might tempt you try and 'diagnose' or judge whether a disabled person is really disabled, which is dodgy because there's only one place you'll get a definitive answer and that's a court of law, and if things have got that far you've got more pressing things to worry about.

### 3.2 Think about barriers

A far more helpful way to think about disability is as follows:

A person using a wheelchair is not disabled until they get to a set of steps.

A wheelchair user can get from A to B as quickly and efficiently as someone walking (maybe more so) until they hit a barrier they can't get past, in this case steps. The steps have rendered their wheelchair useless and prevent the person access to the building or wherever. The person is no less capable than before but they've been stopped in their tracks; the environment has disabled them.

This is why, in the UK at least, we talk about "disabled people" rather than "person with a disability" – the problem is not the person, it's the environment or society. This is known as the Social Model of Disability that emerged in the UK in the 80s.

Think again about the ace PD who struggled with self-shooting; maybe they just needed a different camera that was lighter in weight and that would be easier for them to carry, maybe they just needed some support in setting up and framing. These were the barriers that prevented them self-shooting, not whatever physical or other condition they happened to have.



### 3.3 Wheelchairs and white sticks

What picture comes to mind when you hear the word “disability”? Most commonly it conjures up pictures of wheelchair users and blind people, but the conditions that people have that might result in them experiencing barriers are far broader than that.

People are infinite in their variety and so are the physical or mental conditions they might have. To simplify things it can be helpful to think of conditions in broad groups.

This is illustrated by the clouds below – each one is a condition or impairment group, each one represents a range from severe to mild and the use of a cloud is deliberate as the groupings are fuzzy.

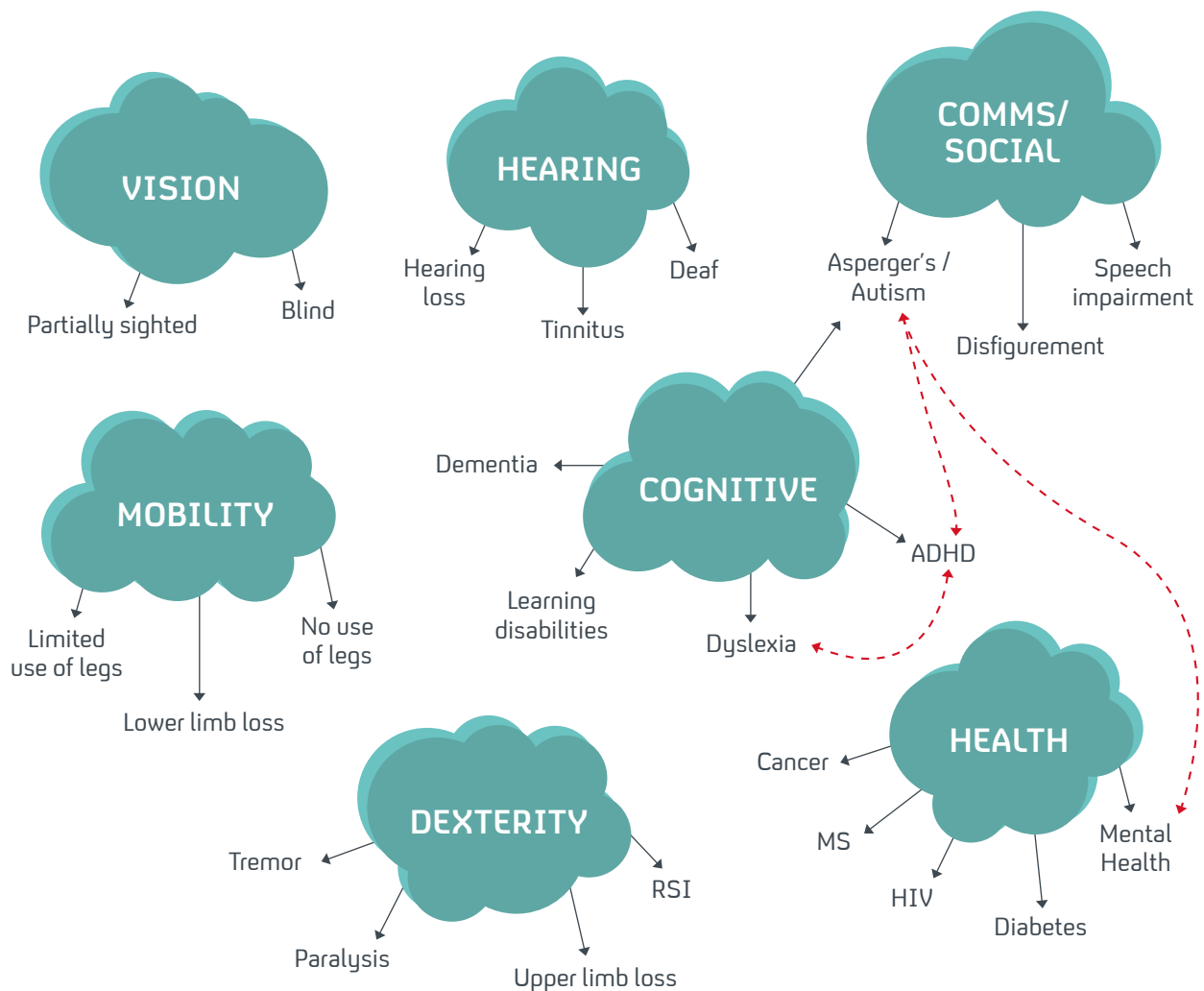


Figure 1. Common impairment/condition groups. Source: Graeme Whippy.

← - - - - - → Example linked conditions

The groups are:

- **Sensory (hearing and vision).** These range from total loss of the sense to partial loss. It also includes conditions that impact the sense such as tinnitus (persistent ringing in the ears). Blindness (which doesn't necessarily mean no vision at all) is automatically deemed to be a disability under the Equality Act.

- **Mobility and dexterity.** These are conditions that impact legs, arms or hands, ranging from loss of a limb through to impaired ability to use them (such as paralysis or tremor). Repetitive Strain Injury is now a common condition for many office workers.
- **Cognitive.** These conditions impact the way people learn, process information or remember. They include common specific learning difficulties like dyslexia, neuro-differences (different brain wiring) like ADHD, along with other learning disabilities arising from conditions such as Downs Syndrome, Williams syndrome, Cerebral Palsy (but not always), and Global Developmental Delay.
- **Communications / Social.** These impact the way people interact with others. This is a wide a range from a neuro-difference like Autism or Asperger's Syndrome that can have a significant impact on social behaviour and interaction, to having a stammer or other speech impairment, to a facial disfigurement. (The latter is unique in that the barriers faced are purely down to other people's attitudes, it is also automatically deemed to be a disability under the Equality Act.)
- **Health.** This includes physical health conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, Diabetes, Cancer, and HIV, along with mental health conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder. (Note that MS, Cancer and HIV are automatically deemed to be disabilities under the Equality Act and people are protected from the law from the point of diagnosis, not the onset of symptoms).

There's nothing in the rules to say you can't belong to more than one group. For example, many people on the autistic spectrum also have dyslexia or ADHD, and 70% of young autistic people go on to experience mental ill health in adulthood. Another example, people with Multiple Sclerosis can experience a range of symptoms including impaired mobility, vision, dexterity, and they may well have depression too.

And speaking of depression, the World Health Organisation now cite mental ill-health as one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, with 1 in 4 people affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. The UK charity Mind say that 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety and depression) in any given week.

Disabilities are therefore broad in nature and will include conditions that you might not have thought of as being a "disability" – such as a mental health condition.



### 3.4 It's not us and them

Do you think that disability is something that happens to other people, not you? Do you think that people with health conditions aren't really "disabled"? Well, take a look at the following examples.

Megan Giglia, gold medallist at the Rio 2016 Paralympics wasn't a Paralympian four years earlier in London 2012. Why? Because she wasn't disabled in 2012. The vast majority of disabled people are not born with their condition; it's something that they acquire through illness or accident during the course of their life.

The fact is that 83% of disabled people aren't born with their impairment or condition. It can happen to anyone at any time and the likelihood of becoming disabled increases with age – 16% of the UK workforce is disabled versus 6% of UK children.

Ali Jawad, the Paralympic power-lifter, was born without lower legs. However he says he didn't consider himself disabled until he got Crohn's .

This says a lot about the label of "disability" and how some people don't self-describe as "disabled" despite having what appears to be a major impairment.

It also speaks volumes about the impact of a health condition like Crohn's on someone's life, something other people might not think of as a "real" disability.

So it's not "us and them". Disability is something that will probably affect many of us, one-way or the other, during the course of our lives.

### 3.5 Things to remember

Here are some important points to remember about disability:

- According to the Social Model, 'impairments' or 'conditions' are what people have, disability is what we do to them by creating barriers.
- Impairments/conditions are on a spectrum from mild to severe.
- Multiple conditions are very common and often linked.
- Disabled people might have impairments or conditions you might not think of as being "disabilities" (such as mental health conditions).
- Not all impairments or conditions are visible – such as neuro-differences like Autism, Dyslexia, physical health conditions like diabetes, or mental health conditions like depression or bipolar disorder.
- If someone says they're disabled it's best practice to assume they are.
- 83% of disabled people were not born with their impairment or condition.
- Non-disabled people – maybe you, maybe the people working for you – can become disabled and are more likely to do so the older they get.

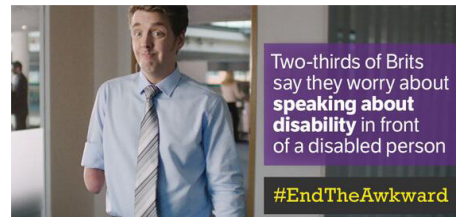


## 4 Stop feeling awkward about disability

### 4.1 End The Awkward

According to the disability charity Scope, two thirds of people feel awkward around disability.

People constantly feel like they're walking on eggshells in fear of saying or doing the wrong thing and causing unintentional offence.



It's therefore much easier for non-disabled people to avoid disabled people and the awkwardness that might arise. Disabled people then become more isolated, non-disabled people are less likely to interact with disabled people, and so the cycle perpetuates itself.

Breaking this cycle was the driving force behind Scope's campaign, which used real life stories and humour to illustrate the awkwardness that disabled and non-disabled people face and how to get over it.

Visit Scope's [End the Awkward website](#) for a wealth of tips and advice to help get less awkward. You can also find a series of [End the Awkward videos on YouTube](#), many of which were produced in partnership with Channel 4.

### 4.2 #isitok – disability etiquette

Channel 4's The Last Leg broke new ground in 2012 by using a comedy talk show to demystify disability sport and disability in general. It's standout feature was encouraging people to Tweet questions about disability that they wouldn't normally feel comfortable asking, using the hash tag #isitok. For example:



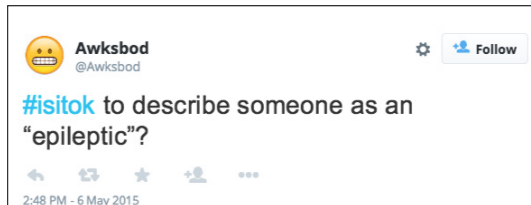
So, in the vein of The Last Leg, let's ask some #isitok questions to explore disability etiquette:



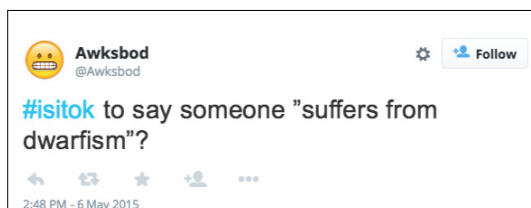
Yes, that's fine – don't feel awkward about using everyday expressions and pleasantries when talking to a disabled person. Trying to find alternatives will make the conversation stilted and add to the awkwardness.



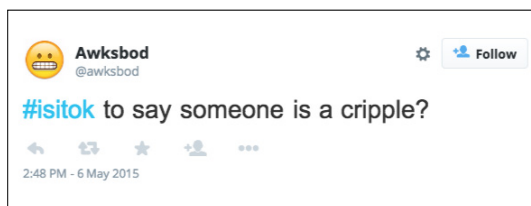
Not really – don't group people by their disability or impairment, e.g. "the blind". It's much better to say "disabled people" or "blind people" (in the UK at least, in the US they prefer "people with disabilities").



Not really – there'll be far more to the person than their epilepsy, so labelling a disabled person by their condition or impairment is a bit demeaning.



Again not really – the whole 'suffering' thing invokes feelings of pity and can diminish a person's self-esteem. It's much better to use "lives with" or "has", e.g. "they have MS", or "they live with a mental health condition".



Absolutely not. There are some words that are universally hated by disabled people because they are derogatory and have become terms of abuse or insults. "Handicapped" should be avoided too as it's derogatory, likewise "Special".



No! It's none of your business how someone acquired their impairment or condition. If they want to share something personal with you they'll do it when they're ready and it's appropriate. If you want to make small talk try talking about the weather instead.



Yes – even better offer them an elbow. Only do this though if the person needs assistance (don't go dragging them across the street against their will!) A better starting point can be to ask "can I help you?" and let the disabled person say yes and how.

### 4.3 Some quick do's and don'ts

Do:

- Treat disabled people just like you'd treat everybody else (which hopefully is with respect and courtesy).
- Always speak directly to the disabled person, especially if they have an interpreter or support worker (thus avoiding the "does he/she take sugar" syndrome).
- Be sensitive to people's situation and stay aware... trying to high five someone with no arms probably isn't going to work out well, but they might offer another way of celebrating success.

Don't:

- Get hung up on everyday language, be natural, make small talk.
- Ask about someone's impairment or condition unless it's relevant to the conversation or they make it clear that they want to talk about it.
- Make assumptions about what people can or cannot do. If you need to know ask.

Lastly...

Don't worry if you do feel uncertain or awkward the first time you meet a disabled person – everyone does from time to time, it's natural and it could well be mutual! See the last "do" bullet... be in the moment and do your best. People generally recognise good intent even if the way it's delivered isn't ideal.

Thank you to the Business Disability Forum for some of the ideas presented here – see their [Disability Communications Guide](#) for further information.

## 5 Be attractive to disabled talent

### 5.1 Five good reasons to hire disabled people

There are compelling reasons why you should think about attracting and hiring disabled people that go well beyond 'doing the right thing'. Here are five of them:

#### 1. Being 'disabled' can have practical advantages

Some impairments or conditions provide the person with characteristics or abilities that can be highly advantageous.

Autism is a great example; people on the autistic spectrum often have great attention to detail, the ability to focus tirelessly on a given task and they can thrive on repetition. So jobs involving things like data collection, tagging and analysis could be ideal for an autistic person, as might roles such as Production Coordinator, Production Assistant or working in the in-house IT team where being organised, methodical and diligent are essential.

#### 2. Difference drives creativity and invention

Disabled people will have different life experiences and perspectives that result in them thinking differently, in turn they will have different ideas, stories and narratives.

These differences can be very powerful. Consider what Justine Musk (ex-wife of Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, SpaceX etc.) has said about the likes of Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Elon Musk and Sir Richard Branson:

*"These people ... were forced to experience the world in unusually challenging ways. They developed strategies to survive, and as they grow older they find ways to apply these strategies to other things, and create for themselves a distinct and powerful advantage. They don't think the way other people think. They see things from angles that unlock new ideas and insights."*

The people Justine Musk cites have all exhibited autistic thinking and behaviour (except Sir Richard Branson who has dyslexia). All of them, regardless of the details of their brain wiring, are exceptionally innovative, creative and world changing.

An example closer to home is John Allison, the co-creative genius responsible for Channel 4's Superhumans Paralympics advertising campaign; John was diagnosed late in life in having ADHD following many years of angst and mental illness because of the way he thinks and feeling like a square peg in a round hole. He now recognises that his ADHD has been a source of his creativity and that it actually 'supercharges' it (see his [article in Campaign Magazine 'Beautiful Weirdo's Wanted'](#)).



#### 3. Natural problem solvers

Disabled people – especially those with more profound impairments or conditions – are often very good problem solvers and creative thinkers.

They have to be: every day they are thrown challenges that they have to think about in advance and plan their workarounds – just consider the challenges a blind person might face in navigating their way from home to work via public transport each day.

The ability to think on your feet is a great skill to have in any job, and disabled people often have it in spades.

#### **4. Loyalty and reliability**

Employees who feel valued, supported, encouraged and treated well are likely to be better engaged, more loyal, harder working and less likely to take time off sick than those who are not.

This is especially true for disabled employees for whom these 'soft' aspects of employment are absolutely critical in order for them to do their job and thrive in their career. If an employer is rock-solid in getting it right for their disabled employees then their disabled employees will then be less likely to look for work elsewhere and will become a valued asset to the company.

#### **5. Don't needlessly turn away talent**

You need the best talent that's out there, and you need it regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or any other characteristic.

So why needlessly turn away or exclude 1 in 5 people when you're recruiting because they are disabled? You wouldn't do it for the other characteristics, so don't do it to people who have impairments or conditions.

### **5.2 What attracts disabled people**

Attracting disabled talent should form part of your overall approach to attracting diverse talent, but you need to recognise that disabled people will have a couple of distinct concerns you need to address:

- 1) What's the culture like regarding disability?
- 2) Will I get the adjustments that I need?

People from under represented groups will probably all have concerns about culture and fitting in, but the awkwardness that still exists around disability and the discrimination that disabled people face (and have probably experienced when trying to get a job) means that it's an even more important consideration for them. They'll therefore want to know whether your company:

- Sees disability as just an everyday thing, or is there stigma associated with it.
- Will be understanding and supportive, or will they be awkward.
- Will have lower expectations of disabled people simply because they are disabled.
- Gives disabled people the grounds to succeed in their careers.



The second consideration is unique to disabled people, and that's whether they are confident they'll get the adjustments they need to minimize the impact of their impairment or condition during the hiring or crewing up process, and then when doing the job. (See section 7 for more details on what we mean by 'adjustments'.)

For example, will the employer be open to discussing their needs and provide adjustments quickly and fuss-free? Or will it be awkward and like pulling teeth?

Underpinning both considerations is *trust*: can they trust you to treat them fairly if they tell you they're disabled? Will you work with them to put in place adjustments that will enable them to work to the best of their ability?

So to be attractive to a disabled job seeker you need build that trust, and you do that by being clear that your company is a great place for disabled people to work, for example:

- Disabled people are treated just like everybody else.
- You value all your people and help them thrive in their jobs and career.
- You understand the importance of hiring fresh, diverse talent.
- You have a barrier free hiring process that enables disabled people to shine.
- You 'get' the importance of adjustments and making them is no big deal.

Make sure your practice matches your words, then put this on your website, your company profile page on industry talent sites, LinkedIn, etc., tweet about it, shout it out in job adverts... do all this and you stand a good chance of building the confidence of potential disabled applicants.

For a great example of how to celebrate disabled talent, see the Channel 4 video of our [2016 Rio Production Scheme Graduation Night](#).

[Signing up to the government's Disability Confident scheme](#) and including the badge on your website and in job adverts and postings is another great way of advertising that you want to attract disabled people.



Signing up to Disability Confident is free and simply commits you to embedding best practice on recruiting and retaining disabled people, something that Channel 4 can help you with.

### 5.3 Where to find disabled talent

Mainstream media job sites are switching onto the need to help broadcasters and Indies address the under-representation of disabled and BAME talent in the industry, and help them find such talent.

For example:

- [The Talent Manager](#) has a Diversity Network feature in its profiling and job searching tools that enables companies to find freelancers who are disabled or BAME. This makes it much easier for recruiters to find the right talent at the right time whilst ensuring they are proactively considering those who might otherwise not come to their attention.

- [Hiive](#) has a swarm called [Inclusive Talent](#) that enables people with a physical or learning disability to showcase their skills, and enables recruiters to find talent that just so happens to identify as being disabled.
- [Talent Bases](#) is a job board brings together freelancers with indies and broadcasters looking for diverse talent.

In addition to a drive to make the disabled talent pool part of the mainstream, those looking to hire can also turn to organisations that focus specifically on helping disabled people find employment. Examples include:

- [Evenbreak](#) is a not-for-profit job-board run by disabled people for disabled people in the UK. It connects disabled people and inclusive employers by enabling companies to post jobs and advertise on the site. Companies can opt to post adverts on a job-by-job basis or, as Channel 4 do, have an unlimited contract which automatically posts all job adverts on [jobs.channel4.co.uk](#) to the Evenbreak site. In addition, Evenbreak is in conversation with indies about creating a pool of disabled talent and encouraging disabled people to consider careers in TV. Join that conversation at the LinkedIn Group "[TV Production and Inclusion](#)".
- [Equal Approach](#) is a recruitment agency and consultancy that helps companies attract, recruit and retain diverse talent. They champion candidates across all protected characteristics and over the past decade have developed tools and an approach that helps them source high-quality candidates and remove barriers that hinder their employment.

You might also want to consider investing in emerging talent to help build a pipeline of talent for your company and the industry as a whole. Organisations/schemes that can help with fulfilling entry level roles include:

- [MyKindaFuture](#) is the UK's largest emerging talent specialist and a key partner for 4Talent, Channel 4's emerging talent team. MKF help employers attract and find emerging talent and encourage diversity and inclusion to be at the top of the agenda.
- [Supported Internships](#) is a government supported scheme that provide an excellent way to help young people aged 16 to 24 with learning difficulties or disabilities into employment. The scheme works on the basis of a partnership between employers and service providers; the employers provide a job opportunity, the service provider takes care of finding the right intern and then coaching and supporting them in the workplace.
- [Change100](#) is an award-winning programme from Leonard Cheshire Disability that aims to unlock the untapped potential of students and graduates with disabilities. Interns on the scheme receive a three month work placement, mentoring and professional development, and their employer partners receive tailored disability awareness training, ongoing support throughout the placement and guidance on how to become inclusive workplaces.
- Disabled People's User Led Organisations (DPULOs) and charities can be a great way of finding potential candidates as they have excellent networks and a natural desire to help disabled people succeed. [The Making a Difference Team](#) in the government's Office of Disability Issues can be a helpful starting point in finding the right DPULO to contact.

## 5.4 Don't put people off, but be honest in adverts

Make sure that job descriptions in job adverts focus on the critical skills, experience and output of the job. Do not be prescriptive about how the job is done unless that is an essential aspect of the role.

For example, take an advert for a Logger:

*Description:*

Must be able to type at 60 words per minute.

*The problem:*

This could put off people who could do the job but are unable to type, e.g. those with dexterity impairment.

*Revised description:*

Must be able to capture text quickly into a logging system.

*Rationale:*

Typing suggests using a keyboard hence dexterity, but speech recognition can be used to control a computer and type. Speed and accuracy of modern speech recognition is on a par with typing.

Sometimes how the job is done is an important part of the job... such as being able to self-shoot as a PD, or being able to do an overnight shoot (which might be difficult for people who tire easily, for example people with Multiple Sclerosis or ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome).

If that's the case then make sure that it's specified in the advert as failing to do so prevents the disabled applicant from considering the role in relation to their impairment or condition and adjustments that might be made.

Being open, accurate and honest means you're not setting someone up for failure. It also means that a disabled person can be on the front foot when it comes to thinking about the adjustments they might need to perform the job.

## 6 Getting it right during hiring

### 6.1 Encourage applicants to say if they're disabled

Your goal is to help disabled people who need assistance in your hiring process get the assistance they need. You can only do this if they tell you they're disabled and need assistance.

Fear of discrimination stops many disabled job seekers from telling prospective employers, so it's essential that you build trust and help them feel confident in sharing. Do this by being absolutely clear in your job adverts that you welcome applications from disabled people and that you're a great place for disabled people to work (see 5.2).

Once you've got them feeling confident to share you must give them the ability to do so; your application process must provide opportunity for disabled applicants to:

- Indicate that they have are disabled.
- Tell you if they need adjustments during the selection process because they are disabled (see 2)

*Additionally you should enable them to:*

- Opt into a guaranteed interview scheme if they meet the essential criteria for the role (see 6.5).

### 6.2 What to do with the information

The information you prompt for, and capture, at the job application stage must solely be used in relation to making adjustments to the hiring process for the disabled applicant so you can remove any disadvantage they might face:

- (1) Share this information with the person responsible for carrying out the hiring process, e.g. the Exec Producer or Head of Production.

You do not need to know or share the details of the applicant's impairment or condition, you just need to know and share what adjustments are needed.

- (2) Whoever is going to be doing the actual hiring contacts the applicant by their preferred method (phone, email etc.) to confirm their adjustment needs. Do not discuss their impairment or condition per se, just what they need in the hiring process.

Best practice is to do this even if they haven't said they need adjustments, e.g. "Hello applicant, I see you've ticked the box saying you are disabled. Is there anything we can do to assist you through the hiring process?"

This is an excellent way to build trust and demonstrate that you really do walk the talk when it comes to be confident around disability.

## 6.3 Making adjustments to the hiring process

The objective of making adjustments during hiring is to enable disabled applicants compete on an equal basis with non-disabled applicants.

The kind of adjustments or changes that can be made include:

- **Initial application method:** some people might be unable to apply for a job using an on-line application form (even if it does meet level AA of the [W3C's accessibility guidelines](#)). You should therefore have an alternative way for disabled applicants to apply if needed as a matter of course, e.g. by phone. See the [4Talent Accessibility web page](#) for an example.
- **Method of selection:** some people might need changes to things like interview questions or assessment centre exercises, for example if they have autism. Alternatives like work trials instead of an interview could also be considered if it was a better way for someone to show what they can do. Note that general best practice is to only use tests if they are used to test performance in relation to a critical aspect of the role, not just as a way of filtering applicants.
- **Materials used:** information, test materials etc. might be needed in alternative formats such as Braille or large print if the applicant is unable to use the regular printed materials. (Note that an employer has a legal duty to provide materials in an alternative format when requested by a disabled person – this can be arranged via the [RNIB transcription service](#).)
- **Tools provided:** assistive software such text to speech and speech to text for people with dyslexia, screen reading and magnification software for people who have a visual impairment. As best practice this could be installed and ready for use as a matter of course as part of being a more inclusive business.
- **Logistics:** it might be necessary to change things like the venue (e.g. if it's not accessible) or interview timings, for example if the applicant needs to avoid the rush hour.

The Appendix contains more detailed advice on the kind of adjustments that might be considered and offered for specific disabilities/conditions.

Some general don'ts:

- Don't assume what adjustments a disabled applicant might need; every disabled person is different, so is the impact of their impairment or condition and the adjustments needed. Make sure you discuss adjustments with each individual disabled applicant.
- Don't offer adjustments at the interview stage that would not be feasible if required for the job, for example giving them extra time to complete a task in hiring that would not be possible in the job because of real-time constraints.
- Don't feel under pressure to provide adjustments that give unfair advantage. If performing a written test is a critical way to assess someone's suitability then giving someone with dyslexia extra time to complete the test is probably reasonable, not getting them to do it at all is probably not.



## 6.4 What can be asked at interview

Do not ask any questions or talk about the applicant's disability or health unless:

- It's to find out whether the job applicant will be able to carry out an intrinsic part of the job for which they are applying, or
- It's for the purpose of making adjustments to the application or interview process.

If you do talk about disability or health for any other reason then you're probably breaking the law under the Equality Act 2010 and the applicant could take legal action against you.

This is tough, but the rationale is sound. Suppose a disabled person gets into conversation with an interviewer about their impairment or condition and then doesn't get offered the job. Is this because they weren't the right person for the job, or was the interviewer biased against them because they are disabled?

The principle is exactly the same as that you can't ask an applicant about their marital status, children or future family plans as all these things could bias the interview and are not related to the ability to perform the role.

So, what does this mean in practice?

- Focus on the applicant's abilities, not their impairment or condition. The objective is to ensure that applicants are able to demonstrate their capacity to do the job.
- If you have any doubts about a person's ability to carry out an intrinsic function of the job simply ask how they would do it.

For example, take our self-shooting PD role. This is an intrinsic part of the job and you need to know whether they can do it.

The question you should ask is "Can you self-shoot?" and you can ask that regardless of whether the applicant is disabled or not.

If they answer "yes" then all is fine, if "no" ask why not. If it's because, for example, they have a visual impairment ask how they've worked around this in the past – this will lead to a brief discussion about potential adjustments that can be made, for example aids that might be provided, how the role could be changed or supported by another person.

Don't get drawn into too much detail, you simply need to be confident that the applicant has the skills and experience you need and that there are adjustments that could be made to enable them to do the job. The detail of those adjustments can be discussed once the job offer has been made.

## 6.5 Take positive action

Given that disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people, there is nothing wrong or illegal about taking positive action to help disabled people gain employment.

## Guaranteed Interviews

One way is to provide a guaranteed interview to any disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for the job. This helps reduce the fear that disabled people have about disclosing they are disabled when applying for a job because it reassures them they won't be discriminated against.

Offering a guaranteed interview was a key component of the Government's "Positive About Disabled People" or "Two Ticks" scheme, now superseded by the Disability Confident scheme, and offering guaranteed interviews is considered best practice.

If you run a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled candidates you don't have to guarantee an interview to every disabled applicant. Instead you only guarantee an interview to those who meet the minimum criteria for the job.

This means it's absolutely critical that you

- (1) Clearly state in the job advert or your job website that you offer a guaranteed interview for disabled candidates who meet the minimum or essential criteria, and
- (2) You clearly define the minimum or essential criteria in the job advert or information provided to applicants.

Failing to do these two things can risk disabled candidates believing they should have been given an interview when they didn't and then claiming discrimination.

## Look outside your network

Taking positive action can also be about your own behaviour; in addition to using adverts or job postings you probably also turn to your own network or go head-hunting to find the talent you need.

- What about using an open call instead to cast the net wider?
- What about considering using someone who is new and exciting in a more junior complimentary role to one you're looking to fill?

Being inventive and thinking outside the box is as much of a positive action as the more 'formal' actions mentioned elsewhere in this guide.

## 7 Providing support in employment

### 7.1 Making adjustments

Removing barriers that prevent someone from doing a great job is a sensible thing to do, right? After all, why waste your time and money and their energy and skills simply because things are getting in the way of them doing what they've been hired to do?

That's the underlying principle of making adjustments for disabled people; remove the barriers they face in doing their job because of their impairment or condition and enable them to perform to the best of their ability. Many disabled people say this is the most important thing an employer can do to support them. (Bear in mind though that not that all disabled people require adjustments – it depends on the nature of their impairment or condition and the barriers they're facing in doing their job.)

In making adjustments both the employer and employee wins, but it's worth bearing in mind that it's not just the sensible thing to do but also a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010, which says that employers have to make "reasonable adjustments" for disabled employees to reduce disadvantage arising from their impairment or condition.

The word "reasonable" is important because employers aren't expected to give disabled employees the moon on a stick or make themselves bankrupt in the process of making adjustments.

However, there's an increasing tendency for employers to talk just about making "adjustments" or "workplace adjustments" because putting the word "reasonable" in neon lights sets the conversation off on the wrong foot... we don't normally talk about "reasonable sickness absence" or "reasonable maternity leave"<sup>1</sup>, so why treat disabled people differently and talk about "reasonable adjustments"? We come back to "what's reasonable" later in this section.

#### Types of adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 talks about adjustments in terms of changes to Provisions, Criteria and Practice, the so-called PCP. In plain language this means changes to:

- The things you provide to enable someone to do their job, e.g. different IT equipment, physical aids, different furniture, changes to fixtures and fittings in the building in which they work.
- Aspects of the role they are performing or how they perform it, e.g. different working hours, modified duties, additional support, adjusted performance targets.
- The way you work as an organisation, e.g. modifying overarching policies or practices that have a negative impact on someone because of their impairment or condition

When thinking about adjustments there can be a tendency to hone in and focus on the obvious provisions (e.g. a different camera which is lighter making it easier to carry), but it's best to take a step back and think as broadly as possible about your employee's circumstances – literally their end-to-end working day from their journey to work to back home again.

<sup>1</sup>. *Secrets & Big News*, Kate Nash, 2014

This is illustrated in figure 2.

<b>Make things as accessible as possible for everybody. Then make adjustments for individuals to address specific barriers.</b>		
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Technology</b>	<b>Communications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuting</li> <li>• Building / site access</li> <li>• Moving around</li> <li>• Emergency exit</li> <li>• Work area</li> <li>• Furniture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer</li> <li>• Peripherals</li> <li>• Phone (desk)</li> <li>• Phone (mobile)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Print</li> <li>• Audio/Video</li> <li>• Interpersonal</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Thinking &amp; organising</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Types of adjustments

The adjustments above are mostly physical things, but don't forget that you can and should consider adjustments such as:

- Varying aspects of the employee's role. For example, a Production Coordinator might be brilliant at all aspects of their role except handling cash because they have dyslexia or dyscalculia, so why not swap tasks around and give cash management to someone else in the team? Job "carving" like this according to who is best at doing them will play to your respective team members' strengths.
- Changing the way your organisation does things. For example, printing information on coloured paper for someone with dyslexia (which might make it look better for everybody), or being aware of simple things such as access to toilets and regular comfort breaks which can be a significant concern for people with a bowel condition.

## How to know what's needed

The adjustments that you provide depend entirely on the nature of the employee's impairment or condition, the barriers they are facing and the disadvantage arising. Remember there is no "one size fits all" – individuals' needs have to be individually understood and met.

There are two ways for you to understand what's needed:

- 1) Ask the disabled employee.
- 2) Arrange for a specialist assessment.

In most cases the disabled employee will be the expert in their own impairment or condition and will know what adjustments they need. In this situation it's just a matter for you and your employee to talk through their needs and come to an agreement on what will be provided. This should be a pragmatic discussion – you should both be aiming for what's sensible and effective and not be overly prescriptive in the solution (there's normally more than one way to bake a cake).

However, there might be situations where the employee doesn't know what adjustments they need, for example if they've recently become disabled or are doing a new job in which they are experiencing barriers they have not faced before.

In this situation you should arrange for a 3rd party to conduct an assessment to understand your employee's needs and recommend suitable adjustments. See section 8 for suggestions on who you can turn to.

### **What's reasonable?**

Don't get too hung up on this as people are, by and large, reasonable and if anything disabled people are reticent about asking for help, let alone help that might be deemed "unreasonable". But it can sometimes help to have a framework for thinking about "reasonableness" just in case you do have an employee wanting the moon on a stick.

Broadly speaking the reasons that adjustments could be unreasonable include:

- Causing undue disruption, e.g. make work easier for the disabled employee but significantly harder for everyone else.
- Causing financial hardship for the employer, e.g. disproportionately expensive in relation to the employers resources.
- Risking health & safety of the employee or others.
- The adjustments are ineffective (it's not reasonable just to tick a box).

Note that there is no exemption for small employers but the size and type of business would be taken into account by a court in determining whether adjustments were reasonable.

## **7.2 Cost concerns & Access To Work**

One of the biggest concerns for employers is the additional cost of employing disabled people.

The sad thing is that this is a myth as many disabled people have minimal adjustment needs and for those who do require adjustments the costs range from nothing to a few hundred pounds:

- £0 – such as changes to the way the person does their job or aspects of it.
- £10s – a few pounds on alternative computer equipment such as mouse or keyboard
- £100s – such as assistive software to help use a computer or alternative furniture.

Some disabled people though do have more costly needs, for example:

- Specialist equipment, e.g. a Braille keyboard, a powered wheelchair.
- Support with travel to, from, or during work, e.g. taxis.
- Personal support, e.g. support workers or sign language interpreters.

These can run into £1000s and funding them could be a concern for an employer, especially small ones.

It's for this reason that the government created *Access To Work*, a publically funded employment support programme that helps disabled people get into and stay in work. It does this by providing disabled people with financial support that helps cover the additional costs of employment related to their impairment or condition.

It is particularly aimed at small to medium sized companies who will have fewer resources and greater concerns about costs.

### **How Access To Work works**

Access To Work is a grant made to an individual disabled person (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) to help them get a job, stay in a job or move in to self-employment. It applies in England, Scotland and Wales (different arrangements exist in Northern Ireland).

To receive an Access To Work grant the disabled person makes an application, not their employer or prospective employer.<sup>1</sup>

The funding can help with support or adjustments in the following situations:

- At interviews, work trials or other selection processes that would lead to paid employment.
- For those entering work experience, traineeships, supported internships/ traineeships, and apprenticeships.
- For those in part-time, full-time, temporary or permanent employment.

There is no set amount awarded, it depends entirely upon the individual disabled person's circumstances. The total amount awarded is capped at about £42k per annum (reviewed each tax year).

It's not a benefit and it doesn't have to be repaid by the disabled person, and a disabled person can transfer the grant from employer to employer if they move jobs.

### **How it helps employers**

Access To Work helps a disabled employee fund his or her own additional costs of employment, thus reducing cost concerns for you, their employer.

Note that not all costs may be covered and you still have responsibilities (see below), but the lion's share will probably be covered – particularly for those with costly or extensive needs – and it should remove cost concerns if you're considering hiring a disabled person.

### **What Access To Work covers and cost-sharing**

The kinds of things that Access To Work can cover includes:

- Communication support, such a BSL interpreter <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note that at the time of writing Channel 4 is in discussion with Dept. of Work and Pensions on how we can make the application process easier for disabled people in the media sector and those employing them.

<sup>2</sup> British Sign Language interpreter – translates from speech into sign language and vice versa for Deaf people.



- A support worker, such as a reader for someone with a visual impairment, specialist job coach for someone with a learning disability, or a helper for personal care needs at work.
- Specialist equipment, such as computer hardware or software or other devices.
- Alterations to premises or a working environment to make it more accessible.
- Help towards the additional costs of taxi fares if the disabled person cannot use public transport to get to work.

Access To Work does not cover items that are considered standard equipment (including computer hardware/software and furniture), standard business costs or health and safety requirements; these you have to fund.

Depending on the size of your company you will be expected to share the cost for:

- Special aids or equipment
- Adaptations to premises or equipment

Cost sharing does not apply to support workers or support with transport.

Cost sharing is calculated as follows:

Factors that determine cost share		Cost share	
No. of employees	Other factors	Employer	Access to Work
-	1st 6 weeks of employment	0%	100%
Less than 50	-	0%	100%
50-249	-	£500 + 20%	80% - £500
More than 250	-	£1000 + 20%	80% - £1000
-	Costs above £10,000	0%	100% up to the current annual cap

Note that there is no mandatory employer contribution if the application is made within the first 6 weeks of employment (voluntary contribution only) – so encourage your disabled employees to act fast after you hire them!

## 7.3 Developing manager and employee confidence

Research conducted in 2015 by the Business Disability Forum on the retention of disabled staff <sup>3</sup> showed that the most important factors in retaining and developing disabled employees were:

<sup>3</sup>State of the Nation: Retaining and developing employees with disabilities – Stage 2, Business Disability Forum 2015

- Organisational values
- A good workplace adjustment process
- Skilled and confident line managers
- Targeted development opportunities for disabled employees

We've already discussed organisational values and adjustments, in this section we look at the other two factors.

### **Line manager skills**

There is a truism that says people don't leave a job, they leave their line manager. This is especially true for disabled employees because of the importance of their line manager understanding their circumstances and providing effective support.

What this boils down to is the ability for the line manager to sit down with their disabled employee and have a "grown up" conversation about their situation with no embarrassment and awkwardness, focusing on the employee's needs and what support is needed to help them achieve their full potential. The manager's goal is to get a "clear line of sight" onto their employee's capability so they can help them develop it, unhindered by the impact of their impairment or condition.

This can be challenging, especially if it's a tricky situation (see 7.4), but in essence it's simply asking line managers to be good line managers, i.e.

- Talent management
- Performance management
- Duty of care in relation to health and wellbeing

The only difference disability should make is in the way some of the support is provided, the conversations should be pretty much the same.

However, lack of confidence around disability and awkwardness talking about it are the most common reasons why managers struggle to support disabled employees, this being compounded by scant opportunity to practice.

You therefore need to recognise this and build it into your line manager learning and development. For example:

- Build disability awareness (or equality) training into your diversity training (if you have it), induction training, annual refresher training, etc.
- Include practicing difficult conversations in your performance management training – things like [Experiential & Interactive Drama](#) like that provided by Steps Drama can be a very effective way of doing this.
- Ensure that managers are well briefed on disability by HR and signpost them to relevant information, guidance and advice.

And if your company is not of a size to have formal training plans for managers or HR team then do what you can to encourage your managers to become “genned up” on disability – maybe by reading this guide!

### **Disabled employee confidence**

Confidence is a two way street and unfortunately it’s still the case that many disabled people lack confidence in asking for support and asserting themselves in the workplace. They generally:

- Don’t like to make a fuss
- Don’t want to be treated differently
- Don’t want to be seen as unreasonable
- Don’t feel comfortable talking about their impairment or condition

They have also probably experienced the ‘soft bigotry of low expectations’ throughout their lives or from the point they acquired their impairment or condition, as well as stigma associated with their condition (still prevalent in conditions such as mental ill health).

Not being able to ask for or discuss their needs means that they won’t get the support they need, which means they won’t perform to the best of their ability, which means they won’t get promoted or see their career develop, and they will be less likely to stay working for their employer.

What can you do as an employer to help?

Firstly recognise that this is the case, secondly provide development opportunities that focus on helping your disabled employees feel comfortable in their own skin and confident in asking for what they need.

A great example of this in action is the Personal Development Programme run at Lloyds Banking Group for disabled employees; run in cohorts of about 10 disabled colleagues at a time, this 3 day residential training course helps disabled colleagues learn to become experts in their own disability, explain it to others and have the confidence to be assertive in asking their manager for support.

Feedback from the course is along the lines of it being “life changing” and not just helping colleagues be more confident in the workplace but also better husbands, wives, parents, etc.

Your organisation might not have the scale to make a cohort based residential course like this work, so consider something that delivers the same benefits but works on a smaller scale.

For example, at Channel 4 we provide personal development training / coaching as part of our workplace adjustments process. Successes have included:

- Providing a colleague who became profoundly deaf with 1:1 lip reading training to help improve his communications skills.

- Providing one of our disabled apprentices with 1:1 coaching to improve his general confidence.

The experience at Lloyds, and at Channel 4, is that making these relatively small interventions have a large impact as word spreads that you care about your people and want to help them succeed. This in turn helps the cultural journey and improving organisational confidence around disability.

## 7.4 Dealing with tricky situations

Best case scenario: you hire someone who told you at interview that they are disabled, you discuss with them prior to starting what adjustments they need, you get those sorted out before they join and they hit the ground running on day one.

That's the way it should work, but it's not always the case. In this section we look at 3 situations that managers often cite as being a tad tricky.

### **They didn't tell me they are disabled**

You've hired someone who didn't tell you at interview that they are disabled, they've now started work and landed it on you.

What do you do?

Firstly don't panic and see it from their side – maybe they were worried about sharing it with you in case they didn't get the job, maybe they weren't sure whether it would impact their role so didn't mention it.

Secondly, respond as follows:

"Ok, thanks for telling me, would you like to have a chat about any potential support or adjustments you might need"

Then sit down, have a chat and get the lie of the land. Don't get drawn into medical stuff (you're not a doctor), don't dwell on the emotional side (you're not a counsellor) – keep it practical by focusing on their job, the tasks they perform, how their impairment or condition impacts those tasks, and how you can help them do their job to the best of their ability.

Listen to what they say, remember it and act on it.

### **I think they're disabled but they haven't told me**

You've hired someone and your disability radar is pinging – you're sure they've got an impairment or condition but they haven't told you that they have.

What do you do?

Nothing. Unless that is you've got a concern about their performance or behaviour (e.g. verbally aggressive towards colleagues). See the next heading.

If that isn't the case it's none of your business whether they're disabled or not – if they're getting on just fine don't pry.

## **They're struggling in the job and might be disabled**

You've hired someone, they're struggling in the job and you think it might be related to an impairment or condition. But they haven't shared with you that they are disabled.

This is indeed a tricky one.

Put aside your thoughts about a potential impairment or condition and instead come at it from a performance management angle; your objective is to determine the root of the poor performance and help your employee make improvements.

For example, suppose you've hired a researcher and they're not as on top of the role as you hoped. You suspect that they might be slightly autistic:

"I'm impressed with the way you keep track of the information you're gathering, but you seem to be struggling a bit when it comes to making contact with people when you're out on location and building relationships with them. Can you help me understand why this is and what we can do to help you get better at it?"

You haven't mentioned disability or questioned openly whether they're autistic (which might be offensive), and your approach opens the door a little for them to have a conversation with you.

In the conversation don't try to work towards a diagnosis (you're not a doctor), instead be thinking of workarounds that would help address the problem and discuss them with your employee, for example:

- Icebreakers to get a conversation going
- Emailing people in advance of phoning
- Having a checklist or script to facilitate a conversation

Remember that it's not your job to identify a disability – if they're not prepared to share then so be it, you can only emphasise that without understanding what's causing them to struggle you won't be able to help them.

## 8 Further help and advice



[Action on Hearing Loss](#) (formerly the RNID) focuses on care in the community, biomedical research and campaigning for equality for the 11 million people in the UK with hearing loss. Making the world more inclusive for those with hearing loss.



[Business Disability Forum](#) is a not-for-profit membership organisation that helps businesses become 'Disability-smart' through sharing expertise, giving advice, providing consultancy, training and facilitating networking opportunities – helping organisations become fully accessible to disabled customers and employees.



[Disability Rights UK](#) is the UK's leading Disabled People's Organisation. Run by and for disabled people, DR UK has a national footprint and provides advice and guidance to individuals and employers, while campaigning for the inclusion of disabled people in society and the workplace.



[Employer's Network for Equality & Inclusion \(ENEI\)](#) is a not-for-profit membership organisation that promotes equality and inclusion in the workplace. It provides a range of guides, training and services for its members.



[Leonard Cheshire Disability](#) supports disabled people in the UK and internationally. It provides opportunities to gain new skills, volunteer or access employment, and helps disabled people to fulfil their ambitions. They connect some of the UK's leading employers to a wealth of talent.



[Learning Disability England](#) brings together people with learning disabilities, families, friends, professionals and organisations. Its goal is to improve the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in all aspects of society – from the workplace to policy-making.



[Mencap](#) is a charity that supports people with a learning disability, their families and carers. Their 'Employ Me' employment services help people with a learning disability to develop the right skills, confidence and attitudes to move into paid work. Mencap also supports employers to understand effective processes and highlights the business benefits of employing from this largely overlooked group in society.





[Mind](#) is a charity that provides advice and support for anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They provide a range of services and support to employers in relation to mental health in the workplace including training and consultancy.



[The National Autistic Society](#) is a charity that supports employers to recruit and employ autistic people and provides advice and information to help autistic people enter the world of work.



[Remploy](#) exists to improve the lives of disabled people and those with complex needs through the power of work. They provide a comprehensive range of services to individuals and businesses to help disabled people get into and stay in employment.



[RNIB](#) is a UK charity that supports blind and partially sighted people. They also have a range of services for businesses to help them employ and serve people with sight loss, including digital and building accessibility, transcription of material into alternative formats and provision of tactile maps and images.



[Scope](#) wants equality for all disabled people, especially within the workplace. You can access information and support on their website regarding [work and employment](#), regardless of your impairment, and they provide [advice and guidance for employers](#) too.



[Stroke Association](#) is the UK's leading charity dedicated to conquering stroke. Their two key goals are to prevent strokes from happening in the first place (strokes are the 4th single largest cause of death) and to support stroke survivors in leading full lives – which includes returning to work and continued employment.

## 9 Acknowledgments & Feedback

Channel 4 would like to thank the following for their contributions and advice in creating this guide:

- Annie Tidury & Gary Bourlet, Learning Disability England
- Emily Fielden, Studio Lambert
- Julia Dodd, Shine TV
- Matt Edmonds, Spellthorne Community TV
- Steve Burge, Inclusive Talent
- Deborah Williams, CDN

If you have comments or feedback that will help us improve this guide please let us know by emailing them to [disability@channel4.co.uk](mailto:disability@channel4.co.uk)

## 10 Appendix – Example adjustments by condition

The following pages provide some example adjustments that can be made for candidates with particular impairments or conditions during hiring.

The goal is to help you feel confident having an informed conversation with a candidate about their possible adjustment needs.

We have grouped the example adjustments by the following impairments and conditions:

- Asthma
- Autism/Asperger's Syndrome
- Cancer, HIV, MS
- Diabetes
- Dyslexia and Dyspraxia
- Hearing impairment
- Learning disability
- Mental Health conditions
- Mobility, dexterity, other musculoskeletal
- Stammer or other speech impairment
- Vision impairment

## 10.1 Asthma

Asthma is a condition that affects the respiratory system resulting in a tightness of the airways resulting in difficulty in breathing, wheezing, coughing and finding it hard to speak. In severe cases Asthma can be life threatening.

Things to consider:

- Ask the candidate if they are happy sharing with you what triggers their asthma so that you can manage any environmental triggers the candidate may be exposed to.
- Consider how the candidate will reach the interview venue. If public transport could prove difficult, offer to reimburse the taxi fare or provide car parking.
- Ensure that your interview is held in accessible locations, e.g. on the ground floor or in a room accessed by a lift. Remember that someone with asthma triggered by exercise may struggle to climb flights of stairs to get to an interview.
- Manage any potential triggers in the workplace setting, e.g. ensuring as far as possible that the candidate is not exposed to pollen, cigarette smoke, chemicals or dust in the reception areas, interview room and routes through the building.
- If selection normally involves an assessment exercise or task be sure it accurately reflects the core requirements of the role and be prepared to make any adjustments that would be reasonable were the person to be appointed. For example warn the candidate in advance about any physical exertion required. Allow the candidate to use their inhaler five to ten minutes before they begin the task and provide some time to warm-up;
- Be aware that stress is a common trigger for asthma attacks – be prepared to allow the candidate a break if the interview or assessment exercise causes them to experience asthma symptoms. Remember that this is not any indication they will continue to experience frequent attacks if offered the post.

## 10.2 Autism / Asperger's Syndrome

Autism and Asperger's are two specific examples of a spectrum of lifelong developmental disabilities that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. Collectively they are known as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

ASDs are often non-visible disabilities and many people, particularly those with Asperger's Syndrome, may appear very able yet may face real difficulties in their dealings with people and situations.

However, people with high functioning ASD (Aspergers) often are of above average intelligence and have specific skills or attributes that are an asset in the workplace, e.g. attention to detail, concentration, comfort with routine and diligently following processes.

The impact of ASD includes:

- Problems with social interaction and relationships, e.g. non-verbal communication skills such as reading body language, facial expression, tone of voice, maintaining eye contact.
- Awkwardness and feeling stressed or uncomfortable in group situations.
- Taking language literally, e.g. not understanding metaphors, humour, sarcasm.
- Struggling with abstract concepts, e.g. responding to a scenario based question e.g. "how would you...".
- Aversion to changes in routine.
- Challenges with planning in advance and organisation skills.

Things to consider:

- Be prepared not to judge on first impression – autistic people have many skills and abilities but may not immediately present themselves effectively, for example do not be put off by lack of eye contact or reluctance to shake hands.
- Allow time to draw out hidden skills and abilities.
- Ensure that the interview times and location are clearly explained – use written confirmation.
- Minimise interview distractions (e.g. away from windows where there is activity outside, phones ringing, interruptions, etc.).
- Be clear at the start of the interview exactly what format it will take – and stick to it.
- During the interview, allow time for the individual to finish the point they wish to make – be patient. Failure to do so can create distraction, confusion or anxiety.
- Ensure clarity of language. Avoid ambiguous phrases (e.g. "think outside the box").
- Provide time before starting the interview to enable the candidate to read competency questions so they have time to consider them.
- Processing time may be slower, avoid rephrasing questions as processing will start again.

Also consider the measures under Learning disability given the similarities between ASD and LD.

## 10.3 Cancer, HIV, MS, ME

Cancer, HIV, Multiple Sclerosis and Myalgic Encephalopathy (chronic fatigue syndrome) have been grouped together because they share common impacts:

- The condition or treatment/medication can cause fatigue.
- The candidate might require hospital/medical appointments to manage the condition.
- Treatment or the condition itself can result in a weakened autoimmune system that can have knock-on effects, e.g. additional illnesses/conditions.
- The impact on the individual can fluctuate (they are likely to have good days and bad days).

Things to consider:

- Flexibility around times and dates to accommodate medical appointments, starting new drug regimes, etc.
- Consider how the candidate will reach the interview venue. If public transport could prove difficult, offer to reimburse the taxi fare or provide car parking.
- Ensure that your interview is held in accessible locations, e.g. on the ground floor or in a room accessed by a lift. Remember that someone with one of these (or a similar condition) may struggle to climb flights of stairs to get to an interview.
- Building in rest or toilet breaks.
- Providing ready access to drinking water.



## 10.4 Diabetes

Diabetes is a health condition that affects the body's ability to control blood sugar levels via the hormone insulin. It comes in two forms, Type 1 is where the body is unable to produce insulin, Type 2 is where the body is unable to produce enough insulin or is unable to use it:

- People with Type 1 diabetes require insulin injections to control their blood sugar levels. Failing to do so will result in significant long-term health problems.
- People with Type 2 diabetes can normally control their blood sugar levels via diet, though some may require medication.

Low blood sugar can result in symptoms such as sweating, trembling, changes in behaviour/confusion and, in extreme cases, seizures and unconsciousness. Unless managed diabetes can result in other conditions, e.g. damage to eyesight.

Things to consider:

- Provide somewhere to store insulin, if necessary, for example on set or at job interview;
- Allow flexibility in terms of interview times or breaks during a day's assessment as a predictable routine may be vital to those who need to monitor their glucose levels, take insulin or eat.
- If selection normally involves a test, be sure that it does not discriminate against someone with diabetes:
  - o Consult candidates with diabetes so that necessary adjustments can be made, e.g. providing written tests in large print if there is an associated sight problem or allowing breaks;
  - o Discuss the test with the test publisher and seek guidance on possible adjustments.

## 10.5 Dyslexia and Dyspraxia

Dyslexia and Dyspraxia are spectrum disorders so the degree to which they impact a person varies from very mild to significant. They have been grouped because they share common impacts that include:

- Difficulties with written communication, i.e. reading, spelling or both.
- Difficulties with verbal communication, e.g. remembering and following verbal instructions, stammering.
- Short-term memory problems, e.g. remembering names, numbers and lists, mental arithmetic.
- Concentration difficulties and coping with interruptions.
- Challenged in organisation skills, e.g. sequencing tasks.
- Poor eye/limb coordination, clumsiness.

However, many people with Dyslexia and Dyspraxia (and other similar specific learning difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) demonstrate strengths in areas such as visual, special and lateral thinking, creativity and reasoning. Many famous entrepreneurs, for example, have been diagnosed with Dyslexia.

Things to consider:

- If selection normally involves, say, a group brainstorming exercise, be sure that you understand how the candidate's dyslexia/dyspraxia affects them and what adjustments they need as this will definitely vary from person to person.
- Ensure that instructions for an exercise are clearly read aloud and provided on paper.
- Provide materials in alternative formats that meet the candidate's needs (large print, printed on different colour paper) or provide coloured overlays if the candidate is happy with these.
- Allowing dyslexic candidates more time to complete the test unless the job requires the task to be completed in a specified time;
- Allow the use of a computer with a spell checker if this will be available when doing the job. If this is not possible then allow the use of a scribe.

## 10.6 Hearing impairment

Hearing impairment ranges from total deafness to hearing loss. It also includes conditions like tinnitus (persistent ringing noise in the ears).

People who are Deaf and use sign language as their first language may have impoverished English reading/writing skills.

Things to consider:

- Contact the candidate to confirm their adjustment requirements, e.g. does the candidate require a loop system (for their hearing aid), palantypist (to do real time speech to text typing) or sign language interpreter? Or are they happy to lip read?
- Ensure that the venue has low ambient noise which will help those with hearing loss.
- Allow the candidate time to adjust to unfamiliar lip patterns and tune-in to the interviewer(s);
- Position yourself so that light falls on your face. It is almost impossible for someone to lip read if the speaker is in front of a window, because of the glare;
- Look directly at the interviewee, maintaining eye contact;
- Don't cover your mouth;
- Don't shout – just speak a little more slowly and distinctly but don't unnaturally exaggerate your lip movements;
- Be patient if not immediately understood. Rephrase what you said rather than just repeating yourself. Some people have difficulty in lip reading certain words;
- If a sign language interpreter is used in the interview, speak directly to the candidate, not to the interpreter. The interpreter's role is to facilitate communication, not to participate in the interview. Interpreters observe strict confidentiality.
- If selection normally involves a test, be sure that it does not discriminate against someone who is deaf or hard of hearing;
- Discuss the test with the test publisher and seek guidance on possible adjustments including alternative formats;
  - o Consult deaf or hard of hearing candidates in advance so that necessary adjustments can be made;
  - o Allow extra time for explanation of the test requirements and administration;
  - o Be prepared to waive the test. There are often other equally satisfactory ways of getting the information;
- Information or instructions normally presented orally may need to be given in writing, or through a sign language interpreter or lip speaker;
- In group tests ensure that candidates speak one at a time;
- Remember that testing verbal communication skills may be discriminatory if such skills are not a necessary component of the job;
- Provide comprehensive, clear written instructions and ensure that they are understood.

## 10.7 Learning disability

Learning disability covers a wide range of lifelong conditions that are acquired at birth and make it harder for a person to perform everyday tasks. Example causes of learning disability include Down's Syndrome.

Someone with a learning disability might:

- Need personal support and help with everyday tasks. They might find it difficult to work without supervision or support.
- Need support to interpret written instructions or read warning signs. They may require pictures to aid understanding.
- Struggle with uncertainty or changes in routine, consequently benefitting from structure during the working day.
- Have reduced confidence in social situations and some people may need support to understand what is expected in a work environment.

Things to consider:

- For some people with a learning disability attending an interview will be a daunting experience. Help them feel at ease and allow more time to become accustomed to the situation.
- Consider using an informal interview. A more relaxed situation could enable applicants to convey a more accurate picture of their abilities.
- Consider waiving certain aspects of the process, e.g. is an assessment centre evaluation appropriate or necessary? A candidate with a learning disability may not have the confidence or the social experience to compete on an equal footing with other candidates in a group situation;
- Make it clear that a support worker, job coach, family member or friend may attend the interview with the person. Always address the individual; the accompanying person should only intervene when necessary or for feedback at the end;
- Structure your interview around concrete experiences that the person can relate to, giving clear examples. Rather than "ensure the files are displayed in an organised manner", say "ensure the files are in alphabetical order";
- Be prepared to ask closed questions for example: Can you use email? Have you done this before? Are you used to talking to customers?
- Remember that interpersonal skills often develop once in the role and as the person becomes part of the team;
- Take into account voluntary work and life experience – people with learning disabilities might not have qualifications;
- Consider if the person would benefit from seeing the job at first hand so that they understand what is expected of them;

- With tests, consult the candidate to identify any problems with the testing method and consider adjustments accordingly. Ensure that any instructions are understood by the candidate;
- Be prepared to waive the test. There are often other equally satisfactory ways of getting the information.
- Use clear language and avoid jargon.
- You might want to consider 'job carving' to create a suitable role. Job carving is where an organisation identifies tasks that an employee with a learning disability could usefully do, and 'carves' out a job from these tasks. This could free up other staff from tasks such as mail distribution and data entry.

Also consider the measures under Autism and Asperger's given the similarities between learning disability and autism spectrum disorder.

## 10.8 Mental health conditions

Mental health conditions can affect the way people think, feel and behave. They are very common with about 25% of the population experiencing a mental health problem in any one year.

There are a very large number of diagnosable mental health problems that, for convenience, are grouped by the medical profession into “common” and “serious”:

- Common mental health problems are generally more extreme versions of every day feelings such as anxiety, sadness, or excitement. Included in this category are phobias, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Serious mental health conditions are those that affect people’s perception of reality that may include visual, auditory or other form of hallucination. Schizophrenia is the most common form of serious mental health condition (the name means “split from reality”, not “split personality”).

Most mental health problems, even the serious ones, can be treated with behavioural therapy and/or drugs enabling those who have them to lead regular lives.

Given the range of mental health problems it is very difficult to summarise the exact impact or specific measures to consider. Instead:

- If the candidate has declared their condition, ask what adjustments are needed in the assessment process with the candidate and what adjustments would be needed for the role in which they are applying.
- If a candidate displays significant stress, anxiety or distraction at assessment, consider breaks or any environmental changes that could be made (e.g. seating positions).
- Consider allowing someone to accompany the candidate to the assessment, such as a trusted friend, advocate or specialist employment provider representative.



## 10.9 Mobility, dexterity or other musculoskeletal

This category would include candidates who have:

- Problems walking (and may use a wheelchair or crutches)
- Problems using their arms or hands
- A back condition or similar

Causes include conditions from birth (e.g. spinabifida, scoliosis), health conditions (such as arthritis), damage caused by strain or repetitive motion (e.g. tennis elbow, RSI) and injury (e.g. limb loss, paralysis).

Things to consider:

- The accessibility of the venue
  - o Can wheelchair users or those who struggle walking get into and around the building?
  - o Is the interview room accessible, e.g. room to manoeuvre a wheelchair, sit at a table, etc.?
- During the interview/assessment
  - o If the candidate has a back condition provide a chair that gives more support to an area of their back (or provide a lumbar support cushion).
  - o Build in regular breaks to avoid the applicant spending a long time in a static posture.
- Invite the candidate to get up and walk around if they need to.
- If the candidate has RSI or other dexterity impairment consider the impact of activities (e.g. tests) that involve using a computer or writing.
- If selection normally involves a test, be sure that it does not discriminate against someone who has RSI, e.g. use of a computer or writing.
  - o Make sure adjustments that are already used by the candidate or that can be used in the job, e.g. voice recognition software, are available for the test;
  - o Discuss the test with the test publisher and seek guidance on possible adjustments;
  - o Consult the candidate in advance so that necessary adjustments can be made;
  - o Consider allowing extra time if required;
  - o Be prepared to waive the test. There are often other equally satisfactory ways of getting the information.

## 10.10 Stammer or other speech impairment

A job interview can be the single most difficult speaking situation for someone who stammers. Their stammer may increase, particularly when the person is enthusiastic.

As well as being under pressure, like every other applicant, a person who stammers has the added stress created by trying to get their point across while worrying about the interviewer's reactions.

The person may unintentionally come across as reticent, hesitant or confused, by pausing before words and/or using words such as "you know", "well actually", and "it could be said".

As stammering can vary depending on how the person and listener interact, it is useful to adopt the following communication tips:

- Listen to the person and allow them to finish what they are saying. Do not interrupt and/or attempt to finish their words or sentences. Give the person time to deal with speech blocks (when words are difficult to get out);
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible;
- Speak normally in a relaxed manner. If you speak quickly this may increase the applicant's stammering;
- Allow extra time for communication.
- Remember that the interview situation is an artificial and tense environment. Once in post and after a proper induction, the individual is likely to stammer significantly less than in the interview.
- In conjunction with the interview, written evidence could also be used as evidence of the person's competencies for the post.
- Be careful if you use telephone interviews, as these may not allow someone who stammers a fair interview. Ask if the applicant is happy with a telephone interview and be prepared to offer an alternative interview process, for example a face-to-face interview.
- If selection normally involves a test, be sure that it does not discriminate against someone who stammers:
- Discuss the test with the test publisher and seek guidance on possible adjustments;
- Consult candidates who stammer so that necessary adjustments can be made;
- Allow more time for an oral test if a person's stammer increases significantly under stress, or allow it to be in a written form.
- If specific oral skills are required, e.g. public speaking or group brainstorming, consider the applicant's work history in conjunction with the test for evidence of those skills.

## 10.11 Stroke

A stroke is damage to the brain caused by lack of blood supply, either due to a clot in a blood vessel supplying blood to the brain, or a haemorrhage of a blood vessel in the brain (a 'brain bleed').

Common effects of a stroke are:

- Physical problems: such as difficulty moving around or using arms or legs
- Cognitive problems: these can include problems with thinking, memory and concentration.
- Aphasia: difficulty speaking or understanding language, which can also affect reading and writing.
- Emotional changes: for example, feeling anxious or tearful.
- Personality changes: this can be things like irritability or loss of confidence leading to increased shyness.
- Fatigue: extreme tiredness that doesn't get better with rest.

The impact of a stroke in terms of how it affects the person and its severity varies according to the part of the brain that has been damaged and how badly it has been damaged. Remember that no two strokes are the same so it's really important not to make assumptions about how someone has been affected or the support that they need.

Given that a stroke causes a collection of conditions and impairments, the other sections of this appendix be referred to for advice on support during recruitment. In particular refer to sections:

- [10.3 regarding fatigue](#)
- [10.7 regarding cognitive impairments](#)
- [10.9 regarding mobility and dexterity impairments](#)
- [10.10 regarding aphasia or speech impairments](#)

## 10.12 Vision impairment

Vision impairment ranges from total blindness to sight loss.

It includes degenerative conditions such as Age Related Macular Degeneration (which causes loss of central vision) and Retinitis Pigmentosa (which causes loss of peripheral vision).

42% of all blind and partially sighted people in the UK can read print if it is of sufficient size and clarity.

Things to consider:

- Contact the candidate to confirm their adjustment requirements. Do not assume that they read Braille, have a guide dog, etc.
- Use a clear, sans serif font, minimum font size 12 point. Where possible, use matt, pastel-coloured paper.
- Be ready to provide all materials in alternative formats such as large print, Braille and audio.
- Consider how the candidate will reach the interview venue. If public transport could prove difficult, offer to reimburse the taxi fare.
- Arrange the layout of the interview room so the candidate can get around – ask the applicant where they would like to sit for the interview.
- Ask if the candidate wishes to be accompanied from reception to the interview. If so, offer an arm and guide the person to the chair. If your offer is declined, lead the way at a steady pace and continue talking.
- Ensure that interviewers do not sit with a light source directly behind them. They should introduce themselves clearly, giving the candidate time to relax and to identify panel members.
- A candidate with a sight problem may find it difficult to respond to eye-to-eye contact, so do not use this as an assessment criteria for them.
- If selection normally involves a test, be sure that it does not discriminate against someone with a sight problem:
  - o Discuss the test with the test publisher and seek guidance on possible adjustments including alternative formats.
  - o Consult candidates with sight problems in advance so that necessary adjustments can be made, e.g. providing screen magnification or screen reading software on the computer, or allowing the test to be completed orally instead of in writing.
  - o Ensure that test instructions are clearly read aloud.
  - o Allow more time for candidates using assistive software or Braille.