

NHS Scotland Learning Disability Employment: Tools and Guidance

Easy Read version

March 2019

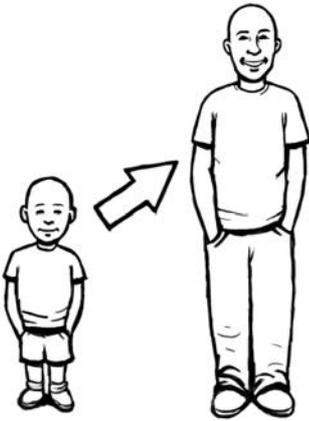
NHS Scotland Learning Disability Employment: Tools and Guidance

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1. Introduction



The Scottish Government has made a promise to employ more people with learning disabilities in NHSScotland organisations.



A learning disability starts in childhood and affects a person throughout their life. A person with a learning disability might need help to understand information, learn skills and get the most out of life. Some people with a learning disability will also have healthcare needs and need support to communicate.



This is only part of who the person is. They can be a friend, a family member, a student, a parent, an employee or employer.



The ideas in this guide may also help you make your organisation a welcoming place to work for people with **Autism spectrum disorder** ([ASD](#)).



People with learning disabilities do not get employed as often as other people with a disability.



Changing the way we see learning disabilities will help us to give better care, give more people jobs and make sure that our workforce is representative.

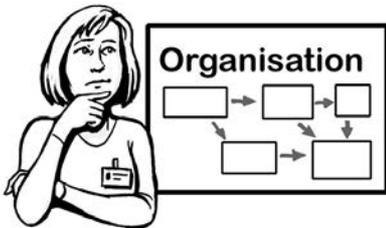


The aim of this guide is to raise awareness and take away some of the barriers that employers face. This will help you to make a workplace where people with learning disabilities can be happy and safe. This will promote equal access to job opportunities across NHSScotland.

2. Creating an Accessible Organisation



Employing people with learning disabilities will help to create a more accessible organisation.



Thinking about hiring people with learning disabilities gives an organisation the chance to look at how the organisation is run.

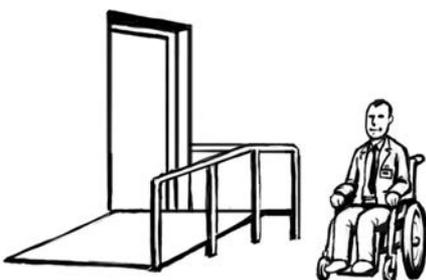


Organisations with a diverse workplace see positive effects in the whole organisation.

Reasonable Adjustments



The Equality Act 2010 says that all employers have to make 'reasonable adjustments' if employers need them. This is to make sure that that all disabled workers, including people with learning disabilities, are not disadvantaged when doing their jobs.



Reasonable adjustments might include equipment and changes to the place where the person works. They might also include changes to how work is done and the times worked.

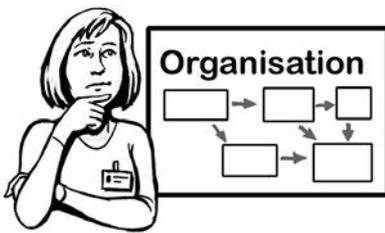


It is very important not to think you know best about a person's ability to do a job.



Everyone is different, which means that not everyone will need the same adjustments. Adjustments should be looked at regularly to make sure they are working properly.

Changing the way things are done



Changing the way things are done can make it more accessible for a disabled worker.

For example, changing the way training is given could make a real difference for an employee with a learning disability.

Outside Support



Some employers think that employing people with a disability will cost a lot of money and need a lot of work when reasonable adjustments will need to be made.

But there is a lot of support available to employers.



The UK Government [Access to Work](#) scheme can help pay for reasonable adjustments.

Inclusive Communication



Everyone needs to communicate to take part in daily life, whether at home, school, work or going to a café.

Some people face barriers in doing this because other people:

- do not know how they communicate
- do not know how best to support them.



Inclusive communication includes spoken language, written language and all kinds of non-verbal communication. It can be face to face or by telephone, written information or online. Inclusive communication gives people equal access to the services and care they need, as well as taking part and enjoying social activities.



Organisations should think about how to support staff to communicate in ways which are more accessible and inclusive. This will support colleagues with learning disabilities.



Some general tips when communicating either verbally or through written means include:

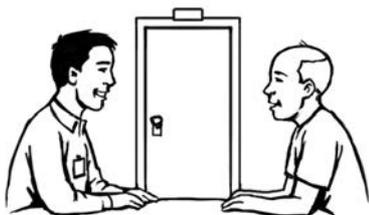
- use plain English
- do not use special words or 'jargon'
- use clear, short sentences.

Face-to-face Communication



Here are some 'top tips' for good face-to-face communication with people with learning disabilities:

- say who you are clearly - explain who you are and what you do
- find a good place to talk, away from noise and distractions if possible
- speak clearly and maybe a little slower than usual, but do not shout
- use your hands and face to support what you are saying
- if necessary, repeat what you say, say it in a different way or use simpler words or phrases

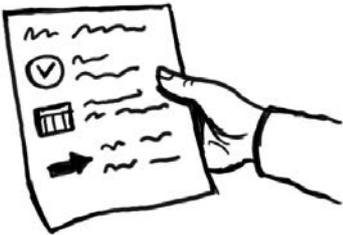




- check if the person has understood what you are saying - look at their face to see if they are confused, and ask if they have understood



- tell people it is OK to ask questions if they need to know more - ask if they would like anything in writing as a reminder or reference



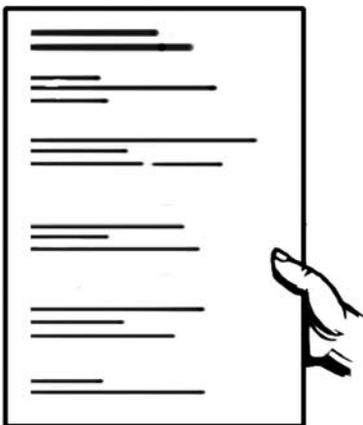
- try different ways of getting your point across, for example writing things down, drawing or using symbols or objects to support your point.

Written and Printed Communication



It is important to make sure that written or printed communication is accessible. Some 'top tips' for accessible printed communication are:

- do not use a font size smaller than 14 point
- use a clear, simple font like Arial
- align text to the left margin and avoid 'justifying' text
- make sure there is plenty of 'white space' on documents, especially between sections and avoid 'squashing' text onto a page; if possible, include a double-space between paragraphs





- print on matt, not shiny, paper
- use page numbers
- if printing double-sided make sure that the paper is thick enough so that text does not show through from the other side

Think about making all letters and documents easier to read.



Many people with a learning disability will need written information in 'easy read' format. 'Easy read' refers to information which is written using simpler words and phrases, supported by images, symbols or photographs.



It is a good idea to involve people with learning disabilities in the development of easy read documents.



Organisations should make sure that their internet sites are accessible.

3. Creating a Supportive Environment



NHSScotland Boards have to help create an inclusive and welcoming environment for people to work in.

Organisations need to look at how their staff can help to create a supportive environment for employees with learning disabilities.

Staff Equality and Diversity Training



All NHSScotland Boards have to show that staff are:

- Well informed
- Properly trained and experienced
- Given information so they can make the right decisions
- Treated fairly by everyone with dignity and respect, in an environment where diversity is valued
- Given a good and safe working environment, which adds to the health and wellbeing of staff, patients and the wider community.





Training in NHSScotland Boards already exists, but more training about learning disability would be helpful.



Important parts of the training would be:

- removing wrong ideas about learning disabilities
- organisations that get it right for people with a learning disability will be better at supporting other disabilities
- when managers give work to people with a range of different skills, they get better at picking jobs that fit employee's strengths and make the team stronger
- everyone is different
- be flexible and inclusive when employing staff
- know about 'reasonable adjustments'
- communicating in an accessible way
- being proud of learning disabilities within the organisation.

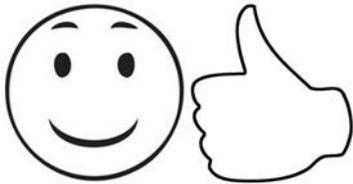


Think about involving people with a learning disability as part of your training.

Staff Engagement Groups



Staff engagement groups are a good way of supporting staff to give their views. They can be a safe space for sharing experiences of work; thinking through what is working well, and not so well; learning from their experiences; and coming up with ideas.



Listening to staff will help managers find out if additional support is needed.

Some things to think about when setting up a Staff Engagement Group:



- Should the group have a leader?
- How does the group report back to the management team?
- Is there a place set aside for the group to meet?
- Give staff the time to go to the meetings.

Learning Disability Champions



Learning disability champions are volunteers who are the best people to talk to about learning disabilities in their organisation, and they show other workers the best way to do things.



This includes giving information about learning disabilities to colleagues, raising awareness and working with other organisations.



A Learning Disability Champion would be in charge of:

- Looking after the safety and wellbeing of employees with learning disabilities



- Sharing what they've learned about the best way to do things across the organisation



- Making sure communications are in an accessible format



- Supporting the training and employment of employees with learning disabilities



- Working with employees with a learning disability, managers and staff groups



- Supporting colleagues who are new to working with someone with a learning disability.

Individual Support



Someone with a learning disability might need more individual support for different parts of their role. This could be during training and induction or when doing some parts of their job.

4. Creating Employment Opportunities



It is important to find real jobs within the organisation that someone with a learning disability can do. You have to think about lots of different types of job because everyone, including those with a learning disability, is different, and has different skills and experiences.



Real Jobs



People with learning disabilities should only be recruited for jobs that are valued by managers and colleagues alike. Real jobs have wages paid and have the same terms and conditions as other jobs.

What types of jobs can I think about?



To help find the right roles there are some general guidelines you can use.

- the candidate might be starting to build their skills and experience,



- jobs that will stay mostly the same, as people with learning disabilities can find change difficult
- roles that do not involve solving problems all the time

Entry Routes to Employment



Employability scheme, internships and work experience opportunities can help people with learning disabilities get jobs in NHSScotland.

Supported Employment gives disabled people work with support from colleagues and a job. This gives employees the chance to be trained on the job and help them get the skills they need.



Work experience placements are another way for people with learning disabilities to find out about jobs in the NHS and decide if they would like to work for the NHS in future.

5. Advertising and Recruitment



To get your organisation ready for hiring people with a learning disability, it is helpful to start thinking about how you advertise and employ people.



People with a learning disability are often unsure about applying for jobs. Pre-employment support will help to make them more confident.



Support given before applying for a job should be clear and accurate.

Advertising



Advertising only on NHS Jobs might not reach everyone who might be able to do the job.



Some examples of other ways to advertise jobs could include going to jobs fairs or sharing the advert with local organisations who work with people with learning disabilities.

Positive Action



The Equality Act 2010 says you can take positive action to encourage applications from under-represented groups.



At the point of making job offers, employers can also take positive action to pick candidates from a certain group. However, candidates have to be as qualified as each other.

Accessible Applications



Applications need to be available in an accessible form. The main things to keep in mind are:

- make easy read job descriptions and application forms – use clear simple language
- have clear descriptions of the job and tasks that need to be done
- do not ask for qualifications that are not directly related to the tasks of the job
- be flexible in how candidates apply – offer alternative application formats.



Selection Process



You will need to think about your selection process to make sure that you are giving applicants the best chance to show their skills for the job. This may not be the usual interview-only format.

Some examples of different process are:



- use a centre where candidates can try different parts of the job
- have an friendly atmosphere with a small panel
- take more time for interviews
- think about giving the questions ahead of time
- only ask questions about the job they have applied for



- do group exercises
- have someone with a learning disability on the interview panel.



Getting to the Interview

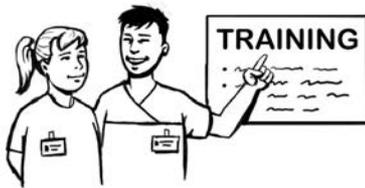


Give clear instructions for how to get to where the interview is going to be in an easy read format. Tell the candidate who to contact when they arrive.

Feedback if Unsuccessful



It is good to give feedback to unsuccessful candidates so they can do better in future. For many people with learning disabilities this may be their first job interview. To stop them from losing confidence to apply for jobs again in future, give them positive and specific feedback on areas they can do better.



Additionally, managers can offer job trials or internships to help unsuccessful candidates build up their skill base.

6.Starting the New Job and Development



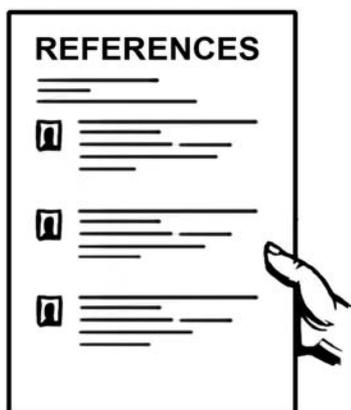
Once in employment, there are things the employer must do and adjustments that can be made to help employees with learning disabilities. There are also things that employers can do to help employees settle in to their jobs which will mean they are more likely to stay in the jobs.

Pre-employment checks



All the same pre-employment checks will apply for people with learning disabilities.

References



References are also important, and may be more challenging for people with learning disabilities who may not have much employment experience.

You should ask for references to try and build up a picture about a person's ability to do a job. If there are no work references, you can ask for them for one that is not from the workplace or a personal reference.

Employment Contract



Employees must be given an employment contract within 8 weeks of their start date. An employee with a learning disability might need some help to understand this contract.



Although the employment contract itself cannot be changed to easy read, a summary sheet in easy read can be given with the full contract.

Welcome to new role



People will need to be welcomed into the organisation and their new job. You should make reasonable adjustments to give training. Managers should keep in mind that it may take longer for people with learning disabilities to become comfortable in their new role and learn the skills needed to do the job.

Development



Once someone with a learning disability has successfully been hired, they should be supported through the normal Development and Review process.



Plans should include support needed to do training and using online tools and resources. This would be a good time to think about any adjustments that may be needed to support the individual.

7. Other Support and Resources

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Access to Work programme gives money towards a support worker or for the cost of equipment or travelling to work.

- adaptations to equipment used
- special equipment
- fares to work for those who can't use public transport
- a support worker or job coach to help in the workplace
- a support service for those who have a mental health condition, are absent from work or finding it difficult to work
- disability awareness training for colleagues
- a communicator at a job interview
- the cost of moving equipment for a change in job location or job.

Disability Confident Scheme: This scheme offers tools to hire, keep and developed disabled staff.

Jobcentre Plus: The local Jobcentre Plus can help NHSScotland Boards find candidates that have learning disabilities and are looking for work. Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus help clients to find work or to learn

new skills and also give information about disability friendly employers within their local area.

Local Authorities: The joining up of health and social care services means that NHSScotland Boards and local authorities have to work together on these areas:

- NHSScotland Boards have to work with local authorities and share information about people with learning disabilities who are known to adult social services
- local authorities have to employ more people with learning disabilities
- NHSScotland and local authorities have to work together and develop new services people with learning disabilities.

Employability in Scotland: This Government website has important information on employment services, with a section on Learning Disabilities.

Fair Start Scotland: Fair Start Scotland is a Scottish Government service that offers up to 12 months in-work support to employees and employers.

Project Search: Project SEARCH connects young people with learning disabilities and additional support needs with employment. Interns are supported through placements with large employers, such as NHSScotland.

Scottish Union of Support Employment (SUSE): Their [website](#) has videos and case studies that show how supported employment works.

Scottish Commission for Learning Disabilities (SCLD): The SCLD are finding new and better ways to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities.

Business Disability Forum (BDF): NHS Scotland, is a partner of Business Disability Forum, and is entitled to Member and Partner Benefits.

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations: The national membership organisation gives support to Scotland's charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises.

Social Enterprise UK: Work with the public sector to help with local health and social care challenges, creating a more inclusive society.

The Scottish Accessibility Forum (SAIF): Aims to make information accessible to everyone who needs it. SAIF does this by raising awareness and understanding of the importance of accessible information and by giving guidance, advice and support to information providers across Scotland.



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