

# Reasonable adjustments at work

## 1 . What reasonable adjustments are

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. For example:

- finding a different way to do something
- making changes to the workplace
- changing someone's working arrangements
- providing equipment, services or support

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. They can be for physical or mental health conditions. They can cover any area of work.

It's not enough for employers to provide disabled people with exactly the same working conditions as non-disabled people. Employers must make reasonable adjustments by law.

Some disabled people might not need or want adjustments, although this might change over time.

## When an employer must make reasonable adjustments

The law (Equality Act 2010) says that employers must make reasonable adjustments for:

- employees and workers
- contractors and self-employed people hired to personally do the work
- job applicants

Employers must make reasonable adjustments when:

- they know, or could reasonably be expected to know, someone is disabled
- a disabled staff member or job applicant asks for adjustments
- someone who's disabled is having difficulty with any part of their job
- someone's absence record, sickness record or delay in returning to work is because of, or linked to, their disability

The employer must also:

- make reasonable adjustments for anything linked to someone's disability – for example an organisation might not allow dogs at work but make a reasonable adjustment for someone with an assistance dog
- make sure other people do what's needed for a reasonable adjustment to work – for example if someone needs information presented in a certain format, making sure other people at work do that

An employer could be liable under the law if they do not do these things. If someone does not get the reasonable adjustments they need they could make a claim to an employment tribunal.

Find out more about:

- [if an employer does not make reasonable adjustments](#)
- [who is considered to have a disability by law](#)

## What 'reasonable' means

What is reasonable depends on each situation.

The employer must consider carefully if the adjustment:

- will remove or reduce the disadvantage – the employer should talk with the person and not make assumptions
- is practical to make
- is affordable
- could harm the health and safety of others

The employer does not have to change the basic nature of the job.

For example, someone in a call centre asks for a job that does not involve taking calls. This might not be reasonable if there is no other job to give them.

An employer does not have to make adjustments that are unreasonable. However, they should still find other ways to support the disabled person. This could include making other adjustments that are reasonable.

## Who pays for reasonable adjustments

The employer is responsible for paying for any reasonable adjustments.

Many adjustments will be simple and affordable. However, a small employer might not be able to afford as much as a large organisation.

### Example of when an adjustment is not reasonable because of the cost

An employee who uses a wheelchair asks for a lift to be installed so they can get to the upper floors of their workplace. The employer looks into this. They find the cost would be damaging to their business.

The employer can turn down the request because it is not reasonable for them. However, they must make other workplace adjustments that are reasonable. For example, making changes so the employee can do their job entirely on the ground floor.

## Support from Access to Work

Access to Work is a government scheme. It helps people with a physical or mental health condition or disability to get or stay in work. Someone might be eligible for a grant to help pay for practical support.

This is not a substitute for the employer's legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments or pay for them.

[Find out more about Access to Work on GOV.UK](#)

## Examples of reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. They can cover any area of work.

## Finding a different way to do something

For example:

- giving someone more time to do written or reading tests that are part of an interview
- distributing work differently within a team
- giving someone different responsibilities or offering another suitable role
- finding a different way to train someone if they find classroom-based training difficult

## Making changes to the workplace

For example:

- changing the lighting above someone's desk or workstation
- changing the layout of a work area or the entrance to a building
- providing an accessible car parking space
- holding a job interview in a room that's accessible for someone who uses a wheelchair

## Changing someone's working arrangements

For example:

- changing someone's working patterns
- distributing someone's breaks more evenly across the day
- [flexible working](#)
- [working from home or hybrid working](#)
- [reasonable adjustments for absence](#) – including paid time off for medical appointments and treatment
- a [phased return to work](#) after absence

## Providing equipment, services or support

For example:

- providing extra or adapted equipment, such as chairs, computer software and phones
- providing emails and documents in an accessible format
- giving one-to-one support, for example to help someone prioritise their work
- providing other specialist support, for example a sign language interpreter

## More examples

[Find more examples of reasonable adjustments from the Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#)

## 2. Mental health adjustments

Mental health includes emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how someone thinks, feels and behaves.

Mental health problems can:

- happen suddenly, because of a specific event in someone's life
- build up gradually over time

- be hard to spot because everyone has different signs and signals
- be hidden because many people find it difficult to talk about their mental health
- fluctuate over time which means that an employee's ability to cope with the demands of the job might change

If an employee has a mental health problem, their employer should take it seriously, with the same care as for physical illness.

A mental health problem can be a disability under the Equality Act 2010. If an employee has a disability, their employer must make reasonable adjustments.

When making reasonable adjustments for mental health, employers should take into account that:

- every job is different, so what works in one situation might not work in another
- every employee is different, so what works for one employee might not work for another
- mental health changes over time, so what works for an employee now might not work in the future

## Examples of reasonable adjustments for mental health

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. They can cover any area of work.

### Working hours and patterns

For example:

- more frequent, shorter breaks
- paid time off for medical appointments
- flexible hours
- part-time or job share arrangements

### Changing someone's role and responsibilities

For example:

- reviewing tasks or deadlines to help someone have a reasonable workload while managing their mental health
- breaking down work into short term tasks to reduce the complexity of someone's work and to provide structure to the working day
- reviewing someone's responsibilities to reduce those that are more stressful – for example reducing phone calls or customer facing work
- moving someone into a different role or department if their current job has a negative impact on their mental health

### Reviewing working relationships and communication styles

For example:

- making sure someone is working with trusted people to limit the impact of different working and communication styles
- agreeing a preferred communication method to help reduce anxiety – for example by avoiding spontaneous phone calls

### Changing the physical working environment

For example:

- allowing someone to work from home to manage distractions or engage in activities that allow them to manage their mental health – for example, so they can take regular breaks without feeling other people are watching them
- relocating someone's workspace to a quieter area to reduce sensory demands
- providing rest areas away from the main staff area to allow someone to rest away from social demands
- providing reserved parking to reduce the stress of commuting

## Being flexible with policies

For example:

- offering paid time off for someone to attend appointments in work time
- being flexible with [trigger points](#) for absence so that someone is not disadvantaged by taking absence when they are unwell
- offering an extended phased return to support someone to build up hours gradually and continue their recovery

## Additional support

For example:

- modifying supervision to provide regular check-ins, prioritising work and creating structure in the working day
- providing training or coaching to build confidence in skills relevant to the job
- providing a buddy or mentor to be a dedicated person who can support with work tasks

## Case studies

[Read case studies about making reasonable adjustments for mental health](#)

## Talking about reasonable adjustments for mental health

Conversations about reasonable adjustments for mental health might come about because:

- a manager notices that someone in their team is struggling with their mental health
- an employee asks to have a conversation about work adjustments for mental health
- an employee speaks to HR or occupational health and they recommend reasonable adjustments for mental health

## What an employer should do

As an employer, you should help an employee who requests reasonable adjustments to:

- look after their mental health at work
- understand what to expect from a meeting about reasonable adjustments

For example, you could:

- ask them how they are
- make it clear they should look after themselves and focus on managing their mental health
- check if they have accessed support available through work – for example mental health support
- let them know about any policies that are relevant to reasonable adjustments for mental health
- let them know that the organisation will try to support them in accessing reasonable adjustments
- explain the reasonable adjustments process and procedures
- agree on a reasonable adjustment meeting date

## What an employee should do

Someone experiencing mental health problems might not be sure what they need to manage their mental health. They might not know what adjustments to suggest.

As an employee, there are several things you can think about when deciding what reasonable adjustments will help. This can help you prepare for a conversation with your employer about reasonable adjustments.

### Think about how your mental health affects your work

For example:

- Are there times in the day or week that are better or harder, or do you feel the same all the time?
- Are there tasks at home or at work that feel possible and easy to do now?
- Are there tasks at home or at work that feel unmanageable now?

### Think about how work affects your mental health

For example:

- Are there some tasks or situations that make you feel good?
- Are there some tasks or situations that make you feel anxious, worried or numb?

### Talk to a friend or family member

You can talk to a friend or family member to ask them what they see and think. People can find it hard to recognise patterns in their behaviour, especially when they are experiencing mental health problems.

For example, you could ask:

- When am I confident, settled and happy? What am I doing? Who am I with?
- When am I unsettled, anxious or withdrawn? What am I doing? Who am I with?

## If an employee's mental health problem is not a disability

An employee's mental health problem might not be a disability.

You should still offer support and explore whether adjustments can help. Simple changes to working arrangements or responsibilities could be enough.

Making adjustments for mental health can:

- help employees to stay in work while recovering from or managing a mental health condition
- make sure employees are well, safe and productive
- create a healthy work culture by building awareness and showing a commitment to good practice
- make it more likely that employees will stay at your organisation, reducing recruitment and training costs

[Find out more about supporting mental health at work](#)

## 3. Making a request

If someone who's disabled needs support at work it's best for them to talk to the employer as soon as possible about what they need.

Nobody has to tell their employer – or potential employer – they're disabled. But when they do, the employer has a legal responsibility to support them.

## Asking for reasonable adjustments

Anyone who's disabled and who needs a reasonable adjustment should talk with their manager or employer (or their potential employer if they're applying for a job).

This is so:

- the person can explain their situation
- the employer can understand how they can help
- they can discuss and agree on reasonable adjustments together

Employers should do all they reasonably can to create an environment and recruitment process where people feel safe and comfortable to talk about disability. This can help towards someone getting the reasonable adjustments they need.

[Find out more about talking about disability at work](#)

## How to make a request

There are various ways someone can make a reasonable adjustment request. They could do it:

- in writing – for example in a letter or email
- in a meeting with their manager or employer – [find out more about having a meeting about reasonable adjustments](#)
- through a formal process, if the organisation has a process set up for requesting reasonable adjustments

When making a reasonable adjustment request, someone could think about:

- what would help them manage their health and work
- what might be possible and reasonable for their employer

[Use our reasonable adjustment request letter template](#)

## How the employer should handle a reasonable adjustment request

When someone's talking about their disability and the support they need, the employer should:

- arrange a meeting – [find out more about having a meeting about reasonable adjustments](#)
- listen to the person and try to understand how their disability affects them at work
- not make assumptions
- consider the person's specific situation

## How to decide what reasonable adjustments are needed

Both the employer and the disabled person can suggest what reasonable adjustments might help.

Employers should take the lead from the person asking for reasonable adjustments. This is because they might have a better idea of what changes would be helpful to them.

Some adjustments might be straightforward to discuss and agree together.

The employer can consider getting medical advice if they need help to decide what adjustments are needed. For example, the employer could agree with a disabled member of staff to:

- get an [occupational health assessment](#)
- ask the person's doctor – use our [template letter to an employee's doctor](#)

An employer does not have to make adjustments that are unreasonable. However, they should still find other ways to support the disabled person.

[Find out more about supporting disabled people at work](#)

## Confirming reasonable adjustments

An employer should confirm any agreed reasonable adjustments in writing. This could be in a letter or email to the employee.

[Use our reasonable adjustment confirmation letter template](#)

## Reviewing adjustments and keeping a record

Someone's reasonable adjustments might need to change over time. They should talk with their manager regularly to review their adjustments, and keep a record of what they've asked for and what's been put in place.

[Find out more about reviewing adjustments and keeping a record](#)

## Reasonable adjustments in recruitment

Job applicants can ask for reasonable adjustments for any part of the recruitment process. For example, someone might need the application form in a different format, wheelchair access for an interview, or more time for an interview test.

[Find out more about following discrimination law when recruiting](#)

## Get more advice and support

If you have any questions about reasonable adjustments, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).

[Find more support for managing disability at work](#)

Related content

[/what-disability-means-by-law](#)

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## 4. Having a meeting

Employees and employers should work together to agree reasonable adjustments. Having a meeting is a good way to do this.

### Preparing for the meeting

Before a meeting about reasonable adjustments, employees might find it helpful to:



- think carefully about what they do and do not want to tell their employer
- write down notes to refer to during the conversation
- practise out aloud, or role-play with someone they trust, to help find the best words to put the points across

Employers should:

- agree a time and place for the meeting
- share any relevant policies with the employee before the meeting
- make sure they're confident talking about reasonable adjustments
- put themselves in the employee's position – think about what is going on and what support they might need
- write down what they might need to know and think about how to ask about it sensitively
- know what the next steps might be and be ready to explain them to the employee

If an employer needs help preparing for a meeting, they could speak to a colleague or someone in HR.

The employer and employee should read any policies the organisation has about reasonable adjustments. These should make clear what is expected of them.

## Thinking about what's possible

To prepare for a conversation about reasonable adjustments, the employer and employee should think about:

- what might be possible given the employee's job
- what might help the employee manage their health and work
- what might the impact of these adjustments be on their ability to do the job to a satisfactory level
- what might the impact of these adjustments be to the rest of the team
- how to avoid any risks to performance or others in the team

## Getting advice from occupational health

An occupational health professional can give advice on what adjustments might be suitable.

[Find out more about occupational health](#)

## Having the conversation and agreeing a plan

The employer and employee should take notes in the meeting to refer to afterwards.

It might be appropriate for the employee to ask someone they work with to join the meeting to take notes.

In the meeting, the employee should explain:

- why they're requesting reasonable adjustments
- which reasonable adjustments they want to make

The employer should:

- check how the employee is
- explain that the meeting is to talk about how to help the employee stay well at work
- explain that some things might be possible, but others might not
- explain what the organisation policy is on reasonable adjustments
- ask the employee what reasonable adjustments they would like and why they think these will be helpful

- suggest any reasonable adjustments they think might be appropriate
- share what ongoing support is available

Together, the employer and employee should:

- discuss how the reasonable adjustments could work in practice
- agree the reasonable adjustments to try
- agree a plan to review and monitor the reasonable adjustments

[Find out more about talking about disability](#)

## 5. Failing to make adjustments

If an employer does not make reasonable adjustments for someone at work or a job applicant, it could be a type of disability discrimination. This type of disability discrimination is called 'failure to make reasonable adjustments'.

It might be that the employer believes a suggested adjustment is not reasonable.

In this case, the employer should:

- talk with the disabled person
- explain their decision
- try to find another way to support them, for example making other adjustments that are reasonable

Find out more about:

- [supporting disabled people at work](#)
- [disability discrimination](#)

## If someone feels they've been discriminated against

If someone thinks they've been discriminated against, they could make an informal or formal complaint to their employer or potential employer.

If the problem is not resolved, they could consider making a claim to an employment tribunal.

[Find out more about making and handling disability discrimination complaints](#)

## Get more advice and support

If you have any questions about reasonable adjustments, you can [contact the Acas helpline](#).

[Find more support for managing disability at work](#)

Related content

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## 6. Reviewing and keeping a record

It's important to review reasonable adjustments regularly and keep a record.

## Reviewing reasonable adjustments

Someone's reasonable adjustments might need to change over time. For example if:

- they're in a new situation – for example they've moved to a new role or they're going through a redundancy process
- something changes at work – for example the employer introduces a new way of working, new equipment or a move to a new workplace
- their condition or impairment changes
- they're [managing a disability that gets worse over time](#)

To make sure the most appropriate adjustments are in place, anyone with reasonable adjustments should talk with their manager regularly. For example, this could be every 6 months or if something changes.

[Use our reasonable adjustments review template](#)

## Keeping a record

Anyone asking for reasonable adjustments should consider doing this in writing, for example in an email or letter, as well as talking with the employer.

### Reasonable adjustments passports

The disabled person can use a 'reasonable adjustments passport' to keep a record of:

- how their disability affects them at work
- the reasonable adjustments they've agreed with their employer
- any reasonable adjustments they think they might need in the future

Using a reasonable adjustments passport means that:

- the disabled person and their employer can make sure each reasonable adjustment is correct, practical and up to date
- if someone's manager changes, they can show their new manager what's been agreed – this saves them having to go through the same process again

To create a reasonable adjustment passport, you can use or adapt the [Health Adjustment Passport on GOV.UK](#).

If someone has worked in the armed forces and has a disability, they can use a Service Leavers Adjustments Passport. [Find out more about Service Leavers Adjustments Passports on GOV.UK](#).

Related content

[/supporting-disabled-people](#)

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## 7. Having a policy

As an employer, it's a good idea for your organisation to have a policy that covers reasonable adjustments.

A policy helps make clear:

- how and when employees can access reasonable adjustments
- how managers can respond and support staff to put reasonable adjustments in place
- how you review and monitor reasonable adjustments
- what happens if reasonable adjustments are not working for you or your employee

You can also use a policy to train managers on the process and how to follow it consistently.

You should review any policies you have that relate to disability and reasonable adjustments. For example, policies on sickness or absence. You should make sure they're consistent with your policy on reasonable adjustments.

## What else the policy should include

A reasonable adjustment policy might also include:

- reference to any physical or mental health or wellbeing strategy
- activities to raise awareness of physical disabilities and mental health conditions
- information on the internal support available – for example disability or mental health champions
- what external support is available – for example an employee assistance programme (EAP) or occupational health services
- manager training and support

## If there is no policy

If you do not have a policy covering reasonable adjustments, you must follow the law.

You can also look at how reasonable adjustments have been managed previously. This might help you decide how to manage them now or in the future.

Find out more about:

- [creating absence policies](#)
- [disability-related absence](#)

## Reviewing policies

As an employer, you should review policies on reasonable adjustments to make sure they:

- are easy to understand and accessible
- are clear on what needs to be done by who, how and when
- are easy for employees to find
- are used consistently by managers
- provide opportunities for employees to give feedback on the policy and recommend changes

After reviewing a policy, you might find:

- you need to update it
- managers or employees need training and support to use the policy effectively