

WORKPLACE SUPPORT • ARTICLE 2

UNDERSTANDING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

A COMPASSIONATE EXPLORATION

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Every employee deserves the opportunity to perform at their best. However, not everyone starts from the same place. For people living with disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health difficulties or neurodivergence, the workplace may present challenges that others never have to consider.

Reasonable adjustments are practical changes that help remove these barriers. They allow people to access the same opportunities as their colleagues while recognising that everyone works differently.

Reasonable adjustments are not about giving someone special treatment. They are about creating fairness and ensuring that an individual's health condition or disability does not unnecessarily limit their ability to contribute.

What Are Reasonable Adjustments?

A reasonable adjustment is any change made to the workplace, working practices or equipment that helps an employee carry out their role more effectively.

These adjustments are designed to reduce or remove barriers created by a person's disability or health condition.

Adjustments might involve changes to:

Working hours

The physical workplace

Equipment

Communication methods

Job tasks

Training

Supervision

Policies and procedures

Every adjustment should be tailored to the individual. There is no universal solution because every person experiences their condition differently.

Why Do Reasonable Adjustments Matter?

Many people spend enormous amounts of energy managing difficulties that colleagues never see.

Someone with ADHD may work twice as hard simply to stay organised.

An autistic employee may spend the day coping with overwhelming sensory input before returning home completely exhausted.

Someone living with anxiety may appear calm externally while experiencing constant worry about making mistakes.

Without adjustments, employees often use valuable mental energy just trying to cope with the environment rather than focusing on their work.

Reasonable adjustments reduce unnecessary stress, allowing people to use their skills, knowledge and experience more effectively.

The goal is not to change the individual.

The goal is to change the barriers.

Common Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Adjustments vary depending on the individual and the demands of the role.

Examples include:

Flexible Working Hours

Some people function better earlier in the morning, while others may need a later start because of medication, fatigue or health conditions.

Flexible hours can improve concentration, reduce stress and increase productivity.

Hybrid or Home Working

For some employees, working from home reduces sensory overload, commuting stress and fatigue.

Others may find a hybrid approach provides the best balance between social interaction and focused work.

Quiet Working Spaces

Busy offices can be challenging for people experiencing:

ADHD

Autism

Anxiety

PTSD

Migraines

Sensory processing differences

Access to quieter areas can improve concentration and reduce overwhelm.

Written Instructions

Many employees benefit from receiving written information alongside verbal discussions.

This can be particularly helpful for people with:

ADHD

Dyslexia

Memory difficulties

Auditory processing differences

Anxiety

Written instructions reduce misunderstandings and provide a useful reference point.

Additional Rest Breaks

Some health conditions require regular breaks to manage fatigue, pain, medication or emotional wellbeing.

Short breaks often improve productivity rather than reduce it.

Assistive Technology

Technology can make a significant difference.

Examples include:

Speech-to-text software

Text-to-speech readers

Coloured screen filters

Digital planners

Reminder systems

Noise-cancelling headphones

Specialist keyboards

Screen-reading software

These tools help employees work more independently and efficiently.

Adjustments to Workload

During periods of illness, treatment or recovery, temporary changes to workload or deadlines may allow an employee to remain in work while protecting their wellbeing.

This can often prevent long-term sickness absence.

Every Person Is Different

One of the biggest misconceptions is that people with the same diagnosis need identical support.

This is rarely true.

For example:

Two people with autism may have completely different sensory needs.

One may enjoy social interaction but struggle with unexpected change.

Another may prefer independent work but cope well with changing priorities.

Similarly, someone with depression may benefit from flexible working, while another person may find maintaining a structured daily routine is more helpful.

Support should always begin with curiosity rather than assumptions.

Instead of asking,

"What adjustments do people with ADHD usually need?"

A better question is,

"What helps you do your best work?"

Having Supportive Conversations

The most successful adjustments are developed through open and respectful conversations.

Managers do not need to know everything about a person's diagnosis.

Instead, they can ask practical questions such as:

What aspects of your work are most difficult?

What seems to make those difficulties worse?

What adjustments have helped you before?

Is there anything we could change that would make your role easier?

How would you like us to communicate with you?

These conversations should be collaborative rather than prescriptive.

Employees are experts in their own experiences.

Reviewing Adjustments

Needs change over time.

An adjustment that worked six months ago may no longer be appropriate.

Regular reviews allow employers and employees to discuss:

What's working well.

What isn't helping.

Whether new challenges have emerged.

Whether adjustments need adapting.

Support should be viewed as an ongoing conversation rather than a one-off decision.

The Benefits for Employers

Reasonable adjustments benefit organisations as well as employees.

When staff receive appropriate support, employers often experience:

Increased productivity
Improved staff retention
Lower sickness absence
Better employee engagement
Greater job satisfaction
Improved workplace morale
Reduced recruitment costs
More diverse and inclusive teams

Many adjustments cost very little but have a significant impact on performance and wellbeing.

Supporting employees effectively also demonstrates that an organisation values diversity and recognises that different ways of working can strengthen a team.

Final Thoughts

Reasonable adjustments are about creating opportunities, not advantages.

By removing unnecessary barriers, employers allow individuals to contribute their knowledge, experience and talents without being limited by an environment that was not designed with everyone in mind.

When workplaces move beyond a "one size fits all" approach and embrace flexibility, everyone benefits. Employees feel respected, supported and valued, while organisations gain happier, healthier and more productive teams.

Ultimately, the most effective adjustment is often the simplest one: taking the time to listen, understand and work together to find solutions that help people thrive.

A gentle reminder

This resource offers general information and reflection. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individual medical or therapeutic care. If you are worried about your safety or someone else's, seek urgent professional support.

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