

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:

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

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. 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. For example, if someone does not get the reasonable adjustments they need at work they could make a disability discrimination 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, if 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 makes enquiries and finds 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 that can help people with a physical or mental health condition or disability to get or stay in work. Someone may 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.

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 time off for medical appointments and treatment
- a [phased return to work](#) after absence

Finding a different way to do something

For example:

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

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. 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
- 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

Any reasonable adjustments that are agreed should be confirmed in writing.

How the employer should handle a reasonable adjustment request

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

- listen to the person and try to understand how their disability affects them
- 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](#)

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](#)

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3. 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 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

The disability charity Scope has advice for employees on what they can do if their manager refuses a request for reasonable adjustments. This includes a template letter to send to someone more senior at work.

[Find out more about reasonable adjustments from Scope](#)

You can also:

- [contact the Acas helpline](#)
- [find more support for managing disability at work](#)

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4. 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 every 6 months or if something changes.

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](#)

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