








Employment Gap: An easy read guide for employers and people with a learning disability




Introduction

 A group of diverse people working together in a workshop setting, with the word "Workplace" written below them.	<p>This guide is all about employing people with a learning disability.</p>
 The logo for Sutton Mencap, featuring the text "Sutton mencap" in green and pink, and the logo for South London Partnership, featuring a blue wavy line and the text "South London Partnership 'Representing and connecting'" below it.	<p>It was produced by Sutton Mencap for the South London Partnership.</p>
 A group of people sitting around a table in a workshop setting, engaged in a discussion.	<p>Sutton Mencap held a workshop with 11 people with a learning disability in February 2023.</p>
 A woman wearing glasses and a grey blazer, holding an ID card.	<p>We asked people to tell us about their experiences of looking for work, and staying in work.</p>



	<p>This guide gives a summary of what they told us.</p>
	<p>It also gives some useful ideas on how to work through some of the problems they told us about.</p>
	<p>It has been written in easy read format, so it can be used by employers and people with a learning disability.</p>

Why employ someone with a learning disability?

	<p>Employing people with a learning disability is good for your business.</p>
	<p>It could help you fill vacancies.</p>

	<p>It can show that you care about your community and value people from different backgrounds.</p>
	<p>Councils and other public bodies will sometimes expect you to employ people with a learning disability if they are going to award a contract.</p>
	<p>It's the right thing to do. People with a learning disability deserve paid employment as everyone else.</p>

What you need to think about when employing someone with a learning disability

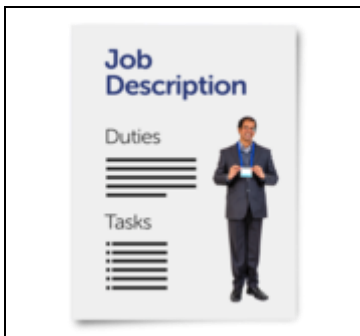
	<p>There are lots of ways of involving people with a learning disability in the workforce, including training programmes, work trials and volunteering.</p>
	<p>However, people told us that they really wanted paid work.</p>

	<p>You might need to put in place reasonable adjustments to enable people with a learning disability to work for you.</p>
	<p>Reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement.</p>
	<p>Reasonable adjustments can be easy to implement and do not have to be expensive. There may also be funding available from the Access to Work programme to help put them in place.</p>
	<p>There are Supported Employment agencies that can help with employing people with a learning disability.</p>
	<p>Supported Employment agencies can advise on job design, recruitment and selection and in-work support.</p>



Supported Employment agencies may also know people who might be suitable candidates for a job.

Job design



Most employers start with a job description and person specification for a role.



It may be that a few small changes to the job description would make it more suitable for a person with a learning disability.



For example, people at our workshop told us that later start times would help a lot, so they could use their freedom passes to travel to work.




People also told us that they might not be able to do all of the tasks on a job description, but could do some of them.





	<p>It might be possible to take some tasks out of a job description. This is called job carving.</p>
	<p>Job descriptions sometimes ask for qualifications or experience which are not always necessary. This may be unfair.</p>
	<p>By taking these out, more people would be able to apply. This could include people with a learning disability.</p>
	<p>People also told us that they were sometimes worried about how work will affect their benefits.</p>
	<p>It may be worth looking into this before you start recruiting.</p>

Advertising


 A man with short dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, is holding a white sign that says "easy read" in large, bold, black letters. The sign is shaped like a book being opened.	<p>People told us that easy-read job adverts were very useful.</p>
 Two people are standing side-by-side. On the left is a woman with glasses wearing a pink polo shirt and dark pants. On the right is a man wearing a dark blue t-shirt with a logo and blue jeans.	<p>You could also advertise with a Supported Employment agency.</p>
 A woman with short dark hair, wearing a light blue jacket, is holding a white sign. The sign has the text "Come to our EVENT" in red and black letters. The sign is held up by blue corner tabs.	<p>You might also try a recruitment day targeted at people with a learning disability</p>

Application forms

 A woman with short grey hair, wearing a pink sweater, is sitting at a wooden desk. She has a pen in her right hand and is looking at a document on the desk.	<p>People told us that sometimes the application forms were too complicated to fill in.</p>
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	<p>They also found online applications difficult.</p>
	<p>It might be that a Supported Employment agency can help someone to fill in an application form. Agencies can also help employers design simple application procedures.</p>
	<p>It would also be helpful if employers allowed other types of applications, such as CVs or films of applicants showing their skills and abilities.</p>
	<p>If applicants are not shortlisted for a job, it is really helpful that they are given a reason for this.</p>

Interviews

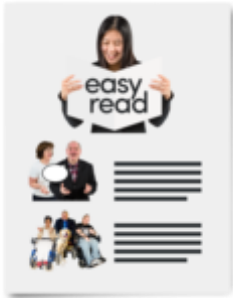
	<p>Support Employment agencies might be able to help with interview processes</p>
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Interviews can sometimes be very difficult for people with a learning disability.



It might be helpful for them to have the interview questions in advance.







It might also be helpful to look through the questions and see how suitable they are for someone with a learning disability




Practical questions (“what have you done...?”) might be easier to answer than hypothetical (“what would you do...?”)

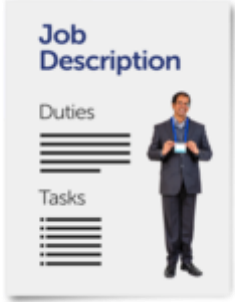






It might help a person with a learning disability if they can have someone attend an interview with them.

	<p>People might also need more time to think about the questions and answer them, or have the question repeated, perhaps using different words.</p>
	<p>There may be better ways than using interviews to find out if a candidate is suitable for a job.</p>
	<p>Employers might want to try an audition or job trial as a way of understanding whether the person is suitable for the job.</p>
	<p>People told us that they really wanted useful feedback if they were unsuccessful at interview.</p>

Supporting new staff

	<p>You might need to adapt your induction programme to meet the needs of a new employee with a learning disability.</p>
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 <p>The image shows a document titled "Job Description". It lists "Duties" and "Tasks" with horizontal lines representing text. A man in a suit is standing next to the document.</p>	<p>A new staff member might need very simple written instructions on what they need to do. This will help them understand the job better.</p>
 <p>The image shows two people, a woman and a man, standing on either side of a large, silver stopwatch. The stopwatch has a red needle pointing to the 12 o'clock position.</p>	<p>They may also need more time to understand what they are being told. You may need to tell people things more than once.</p>
 <p>The image shows a woman with long dark hair looking intently at a laptop. The laptop has the word "COMPUTER" on the lid.</p>	<p>There may be specific difficulties with computer logins or use of telephones.</p>
 <p>The image is a stylized icon of a wayfinding signpost. It consists of a vertical black pole with several horizontal, arrow-shaped signs pointing in different directions.</p>	<p>There may be other practical support that would help the new staff member, such as a map of the building, or easy read signs and posters. These can often help other staff members.</p>
 <p>The image shows a sign for a "Training Room". It features a photograph of a man in a suit pointing at a whiteboard in a room. The text "Training Room" is written below the photo.</p>	<p>You might also need to adapt your training programme to enable people with a learning disability to take part.</p>



You might want to provide a buddy or a mentor to help settle someone into their new role.



It is helpful to think about the whole staff team, not just the new staff member with a learning disability.








Think about how to make people feel welcome and part of the team.



This includes being involved in social activities and day to day conversations alongside the rest of the staff.



You might need to treat the new employee differently to other staff. Think about how this will be managed within the staff team.

	<p>Staff may need to understand that there are additional needs, such as time for taking medication. But it's important to maintain confidentiality.</p>
	<p>The staff team may benefit from disability awareness training. Remember, this might be good for your business, as well as supporting the new staff member.</p>
	<p>You might be able to get help from a Supported Employment agency.</p>
	<p>Supported Employment agencies can help a new staff member settle into their job.</p>
	<p>Supported Employment agencies might be able to advise you on reasonable adjustments. It is of course also important to ask the new employee what support they think they need.</p>



Supported Employment agencies might be able to provide a support worker who can attend the workplace with the new staff member to help them learn the job. This is usually just for a few weeks.

Staff development



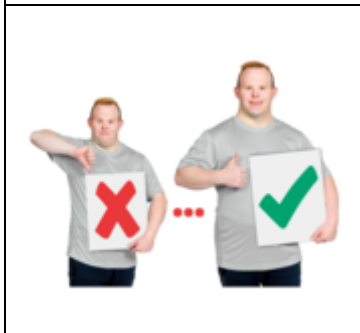
People with a learning disability told us that they want the chance to progress in their employment.



This means having access to appraisals and training and development plans alongside other staff, although they may need to be done a bit differently.








It also means that people should be included in training and staff development. These may need to be adapted so they are suitable for someone with a learning disability.



It also means telling people if they are not meeting the standards you have set. By being clear and open, you can help people learn and develop in their role.

What to do if things get difficult

	<p>People at the workshop gave us lots of examples of where things can go wrong for employees with a learning disability.</p>
	<p>Sometimes people were unable to continue in employment after short term support ended.</p>
	<p>It's really important to think about how the job will work out in the longer term.</p>
	<p>Sometimes people's health needs change, which means they are unable to do some parts of their job.</p>
	<p>Employers might be able to make changes to the job to allow them to stay in work.</p>



People also told us about challenges getting to work. For example, if the ramp on a bus isn't working, this has a much bigger impact on a wheelchair user than on everyone else.



Sometime employers change terms and conditions of employment, without realising the impact on people with a learning disability.



These changes may be necessary, but it is right to understand the impact on different people before putting them in place.



Some simple changes can help people with a learning disability. For example, swapping tasks between staff so everyone can do things they are good at.



People said they sometimes felt lonely and isolated at work. Sometimes, people felt this was deliberate and bullying.



Managers need to lead by example, making sure they involve employees with a learning disability in discussions and social events. Employers also need to have robust policies on workplace bullying.



It also helps if someone with a learning disability has a trusted person they can talk to if things are not going well.



Some people said they got bored because they ended up in dead-end jobs with no opportunity for progression.



Employers might want to think about how to help people progress into other roles, or how to adapt a job to make it less boring.

