

Involving people with a learning disability and autistic people in delivering The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism



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Introduction

This guidance is intended to help employers involve people with a learning disability and autistic people in co-delivering The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism.

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training is co-delivered by experts with lived experience. When we use the term 'expert with lived experience', we mean a person with a learning disability or an autistic person. The principles of this document will equally apply to 'experts by experience', a term which includes carers and family members.

This document focuses on inclusion, support and remuneration. It aims to help employers offer opportunities that are accessible to people with a learning disability and autistic people.

Opportunities to co-deliver The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training should support people's choices and preferences, rather than excluding people due to their circumstances.

The guidance should be read alongside the [Health and Care Act 2022](#), the relevant Code of Practice when it is available, the [Equality Act 2010](#) and, as appropriate, the [public sector equality duty](#).

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Background

In November 2019, the government published [Right to be heard](#). This was the government's response, following a consultation, which set out the intention to introduce mandatory learning disability and autism training for health and care staff.

In July, the Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a requirement that service providers regulated by the Care Quality Commission should ensure their staff receive training on learning disability and autism appropriate to the person's role.

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism is the government's preferred and recommended training for health and social care staff. It was developed as a single standardised training package as set out in *Right to be heard* and needs to be co-delivered by experts with lived experience of learning disability and autistic experts with lived experience.

It was co-produced, trialled and independently evaluated in order to provide good practice training on learning disability and autism.

It is hoped that introducing The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in health and care settings, and all staff receiving learning disability and autism training at a level appropriate to their role, will mean that:

- culture and practice are enhanced
- staff have a better understanding of the needs of people with a learning disability and autistic people
- health and wellbeing outcomes are improved

Aims of this guidance

This guidance sets out best practice for the employment and payment of people with a learning disability and autistic people to co-deliver The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training.

Guiding principles

The information in this section is directly from the lived experience of people with a learning disability, autistic people and subject matter experts.

Minimum expectations

- People must be recognised and paid for the work they do and be paid at a rate that is appropriate to their role.
- They should be paid the same rate that anyone who is not autistic or without a disability is paid for the same or equivalent work.
- People should be given clear accessible information to help them to make informed choices about the work. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that this information meets the Accessible Information Standard.
- Terms and conditions of employment should be discussed and agreed.
- Organisations must overcome barriers to employment by meeting the needs of individuals. For example, by making buildings accessible, offering flexible working hours and providing accessible information.
- There must be a fair and transparent recruitment process.
- Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments should be made to all employment processes and procedures. This includes development opportunities and processes to manage performance. It may be helpful to identify a person or co-ordinator who is responsible for doing this.
- People must be supported with the practical, emotional and psychological elements of their role.

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Who should be included?

It is important that experts with lived experience clearly contribute their knowledge and perspectives to the relevant subjects within the training. Therefore, as a minimum, at least one person with a learning disability and one autistic person must be involved in delivering the relevant sections to both tiers of the training.

Tier 1 training requires a facilitator and the live contribution of two experts with lived experience: one autistic person and one person with a learning disability, as a minimum.

Tier 2 training is delivered in two parts: learning disability and autism. Each requires both a facilitator and the presence of an expert with lived experience of the relevant subject, as a minimum.

Family members who are not autistic and do not have a learning disability cannot take the place of autistic experts or experts with a learning disability in co-delivery of the training.

The facilitator is someone who is skilled in the delivery and facilitation of training about learning disability and autism. A facilitator is required in addition to the experts with lived experience. This person may be, but is not required to be, an expert with lived experience.

Providers of services to children and young people should consider how The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training they offer can involve children and young people with a learning disability and autistic children and young people.

Co-production

The partnership Think Local, Act Personal describes co-production as an equal relationship between the people who use services and the people responsible for services¹. They work together, from design to delivery. They share strategic decision-making about policies as well as decisions about the best way to deliver services.

It is a long-term relationship built on trust and mutual respect. The lived experience of people who use services is seen as an asset. It is valued as much as the professional experience of people responsible for delivering services.

¹ [Think Local Act Personal. 'Ladder of Co-production', n.d. \(viewed on 7 December 2022\)](#)

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The value of lived experience

Lived experience can be defined as: “The experience(s) of people on whom a social issue, or combination of issues, has had a direct impact.”² Experts with lived experience of autism or learning disability have wisdom and insight that is unique and valuable.

People are complex and have many sides to their lives and personalities. They will have a lived experience of several different situations and challenges. When we see people as people, and not just as a diagnosis or label, the complexity of their lives can shine a light on the materials we share during training.

“As a person who is autistic and from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background I face a triple barrier: language barriers, being discriminated against because I am from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background, and also because I am disabled.

I don't have lots of networks with people so I don't get to hear about lots of jobs. When jobs are advertised, people often have someone in mind for them. It is hard to break into this to actually get a fair chance to go for a job. You have to be very confident to be able to challenge discrimination. I have got a quiet personality so it's not natural to speak up like this.”

The benefits of co-delivery

Subject matter experts have experience gained through study and work. Experts with lived experience bring wisdom and insight gained from their lives. Both are equally valuable. Many people will have both personal expertise as well as expertise in the subject.

In The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training, experts with lived experience co-deliver the training alongside facilitators who have knowledge about learning disability and autism. This co-delivery model enhances the learners' experience.

² [Sandhu B. 'The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change: The Need for Leadership and Organisational Development in the Social Sector', July 2017 \(viewed on 7 December 2022\)](#)

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Experts with lived experience bring essential qualities to The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training. These include:

- being able to bring to life personal knowledge and understanding
- offering an interactive contribution that has an enduring impact on participants
- inspiring learners by their wish to improve the quality of life and equality of access for others
- the experiences of experts with lived experience are dynamic and their live interaction with the learners can help make the session feel relevant and contemporary
- by modelling positive approaches, they can demonstrate accessible communication and illustrating the social model of disability
- dispelling myths about ability, autonomy and accountability
- showing how positive engagement can identify and overcome barriers to good practice
- shining a light on unconscious biases and power imbalances

People who use their lived experiences at work are part of a constant cycle of improvement. Their contribution encourages thinking such as, 'What else could I be doing to make a difference?' and 'What are the best ways of doing that?'

Values

Attitudes are important. As well as making recruitment and employment more accessible, employers must understand the qualities that people with a learning disability and autistic people bring to The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training. They must have a real commitment to learning from them and working together. They must also consider the need for experts with lived experience to be representative of other protected characteristics, intersectionality and the local population.

Co-delivery of The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training requires and also enables discriminatory attitudes in the workforce to be highlighted and addressed.

How a person thinks can depend on their life experiences. Sometimes they have beliefs and views about other people that might not be accurate or reasonable. This is known as 'unconscious bias'.

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As a starting point, consider:

- Do you keep a record of who applies for your jobs and who gets them? Of who progresses in their career and of who is subject to disciplinary processes?
- Do you analyse this information and look for evidence of unconscious bias?
- Do you use this to help you do things differently?

The power of paid employment

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training experts with lived experience should never be expected to share their lived experience for free. Most roles where people are asked to share their lived experience should be paid jobs. Experts with lived experience are giving the benefit of their expertise and lessons learned.

No one should be expected to volunteer to co-deliver The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training as this fails to give experts with lived experience the same value and respect as that of their colleagues with subject matter expertise.

Having a job is good for people's wellbeing. It is part of what keeps them well.

“Just being told that I had got the job was amazing. You don't know what it means to people. I've got a lot more respect now. I've got more confidence. My family are proud of me for what I have achieved. Having a job can lead on to lots of other opportunities too. I was brave enough to speak at my mum's funeral. Then people see you differently and know what you are capable of.”

Paid roles also bring a sense of pride and self-esteem.

“I would rather spend my wages than benefits. I haven't earned that money. I'm entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) because that is for what I struggle with, with my disability. But I've worked for my wage and I'm proud of that.”

Paid roles also bring new opportunities to people, such as learning new skills, trying new things and being challenged. Employers should not make assumptions about what people can and cannot do.

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Many autistic people and people with a learning disability want a career, not just a job. This includes wanting to get promotions and take on more responsibility. As expert with lived experience co-trainer roles are introduced, employers should consider:

- opportunities and support for people to develop
- autonomy and responsibility for people to take on and lead things
- how employees can learn and progress with their careers

Overcoming barriers

People apply for jobs from many different routes. Employers that value diverse and individual experiences, focusing on what each person has to contribute and developing their strengths, will be better prepared to overcome some of the barriers.

Before jobs are created, think proactively about the culture, how reasonable adjustments may be made and what are fair and acceptable levels of support during recruitment. Be as open and transparent about this right from the start in order to help applicants.

Considerations

- Reading, writing and math. Some employers will not employ someone without basic qualifications. Being strict about qualifications or grades excludes some people from certain jobs, when often what is required is personal experience and knowledge.
- Be clear about what you are looking for. State the specific type of expert with lived experience you are looking for and what the job involves.
- Make it clear right from the start what the job role is, the development opportunities, personal wellbeing support and remuneration options.
- Think about the job title. Does it describe what the job is? How long and wordy is it? Will it attract people to apply for the job? Do not use jargon or acronyms. Does the job title give status and respect to the person in the job?
- The job pack needs to be fully accessible and available in a range of formats.
- Think about where you will advertise the job. How will the right people get to know about the job? Most mainstream job websites are not accessible and can be overwhelming. Work with local and national groups, such as carers groups and self-advocacy, user-led organisations like Learning Disability England, People First, the National Autistic Taskforce, Autistic UK and the National Autistic Society.
- Advertising jobs online. Not everyone has access to the internet or is able to find and apply for jobs online. Consider advertising through local learning disability and autistic groups.

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- Liaise with local employment support organisations and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentre Plus - They have expertise in accessible recruitment and will have networks that they can share your job information with. Think about how long you will give people to apply for the job. People might need support with the application process, and they will need time to arrange for that support. It also takes a while for the job to get circulated around different networks, so it can take a while for people to even hear about the job.
- Build in time and opportunity for people to consider the advert. Invite questions and queries. Be open and flexible in the ways in which people can respond.
- Be as clear as possible about the benefits that come with the job. Say what the full-time pay is, but if it is a part-time job then say what the actual salary is for this job. Explain holidays and other benefits. Does the pay get reviewed? Is the salary on a scale and will it go up as people get more experience?
- Consider the need for people to use written information. Is this essential for the job or can support and adjustments be offered with this? Design a recruitment process that is inclusive for people who do not find reading and writing easy.
- Include information about the values of the organisation. Why should people want to work for you? What do you stand for? What is it like to work for you? Offer people the opportunity to talk to other experts with lived experience already working for you.
- Think about the length of the contract being offered. People can get stuck in a vicious circle of low-paid short-term contracts. They cannot come off benefits in this situation and there is no security and no opportunity to progress or plan for the future.
- Short-term contracts can adversely affect people's benefits. Benefits change when people start work, but when contracts finish it takes a long time for people to get their benefits back to where they were before they started work. This puts people off even going for a job.
- Interviews. If you have an interview process, consider what it is you need from it and how you can make it inclusive:
 - What are people required to do?
 - What is the environment?
 - How can it be adjusted for different communication styles?

Once people have a job, it can be easier to find and apply for others. Knowing how to do the application and the interview gets easier. Getting the first job can be the biggest hurdle.

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Inclusive recruitment

Some excellent experts with lived experience may have little or no experience of application forms or interviews. Existing recruitment and employment practices may have excluded them from applying. Therefore, it is important that employers do not stick to a traditional model of job advert, application form and interview.

Employers could develop a broad advert looking for talent that can be used to ask for expressions of interest. People can be invited to a talent-spotting day where there are many opportunities for them to show their skills and knowledge and learn more about local services and the job. They can be added to a list of people who are then contacted with information when a job comes up.

Working co-operatively with self-advocates to improve local service policies and practices can help them develop the skills needed for trainers in The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training.

The process should be designed to be a positive experience for all applicants and avoid causing damage or trauma.

Employers should ask themselves:

- What is the best way of assessing candidates against the criteria needed to do this job?
- Is it possible to create a job and let someone come in as a paid trainee?
- Can we let people show examples of their previous work as part of their application or interview?
- How flexible are we prepared to be as an employer?
- Is a job share or another flexible structure possible?

Employing and paying people for involvement

Accessible opportunities

Employing people on standard and accessible contracts is the fairest method of engaging experts with lived experience to co-deliver The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training. They can be offered a range of contractual hours to suit the needs of the employer and the employee. In some instances, standard salaried employment is not wanted or needed.

A range of involvement and remuneration options that can be adapted to the circumstances of individuals will be needed so employers can be as inclusive as possible and engage trainers to co-deliver The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training.

For example, employment, self-employment, bank or agency-type arrangements will be attractive to different people according to their circumstances. Importantly, each will also impact differently on an individual's financial affairs, affecting tax and national insurance contributions, and any benefits people are entitled to claim.

Inclusive employment models are listed for consideration below. They have been developed across various sectors and have been found to work well. This list is not exhaustive and it is important that employers find the best way to employ people inclusively.

Job coaching

One approach could be to use a job coach to offer one-to-one support, if required, for people with a learning disability or autistic people. A job coach will assess the individual workplace needs of a person with a learning disability or an autistic person. The coach will offer support and guidance to help them make the most of their strengths and improve their working skills. This may also include preparing people for work activity, supporting the delivery partner organisation with job carving (designing a job to fit around a person's skills and abilities), and creating a positive and supportive working environment.

Co-working

The co-worker model was developed by the learning disability rights charity CHANGE and is used by different organisations including NHS England. It is a system of working where a person with a learning disability is employed to work with a colleague who does not have a learning disability. Both individuals work concurrently and co-operatively, sharing power, on the same area of work. They are paid the same salary for doing so.

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We all have different skills and expertise. The co-workers with a learning disability can bring to the partnership a deep understanding of having a learning disability and what that means. They also have a real understanding of their peers and how services work from their own experience.

In practice, this way of working feeds into the skills and expertise of each of the co-workers. It enables them to learn from each other and develop a real partnership. In addition, the person with a learning disability may have their own PA or support worker funded through Access to Work, which is a separate relationship to the one they have with their co-worker. The co-worker model highlights and builds on each worker's strengths, talents and abilities.

Employment is the term used when a person is asked to work on a regular basis with a guaranteed salary. Terms and conditions require regular attendance for a set number of hours per week.

NHS England provide [detailed guidance](#) about how to employ people with a learning disability, autistic people, and family carers.

Alternatives to employment

When employment is not wanted or suitable there are other ways to involve people, including:

- offering steps into employment such as supported internships
- through local community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations working in partnership with delivery partners to provide training or consultancy services
- offering sessional freelance opportunities
- commissioning small and medium enterprise groups
- offering volunteering opportunities to experts with lived experience who wish to be involved but find paid work unsuitable for their situation

Recruiting experts with lived experience

The process of recruiting and employing people should be co-produced from the start, through to completion. For example, experts with lived experience should be equal members of the group designing the jobs. They should co-produce the job description and person specification and advise on where to advertise the jobs. They should be part of the shortlisting process and take part in deciding the format of the selection process. They should be on selection panels and have a role in deciding who to offer the job to.

They can contribute to the induction and help shape the ongoing support.

If employers do not have existing relationships with experts with lived experience who can get involved at this stage, local self-advocacy, user-led groups may be able to help. Employers should expect to pay community groups for their time and expertise.

Local relationships can help at every stage of the recruitment process, as they often have strong, local networks that include people employers want to reach.

Applications

Application forms can feel like a puzzle that people with a learning disability and autistic people do not know the rules for.

When advertising a job employers should first consider if an application form is needed.

If a form is needed, then consider:

- Is it focused on the skills to do the job advertised?
- Is it clear what information you are looking for?
- Could the application form be split into parts and only ask for information required for the next stage of the process?
- Could people submit their application by video or audio recording?
- Can the form be completed with applicants as part of a conversation?
- How easy is it to submit the application? Does it require access to the internet, an online account or literacy skills that are only needed to complete the form and not needed for the role?
- Is the form in plain English?
- Is there an easy-read version?

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- Does the application form work with screen readers and other accessibility technology?
- Do you provide your application form in other formats? Are they ready to go or does it take time to get them made up when people request them?
- Does your application forms have language barriers if people's first language is not English?
- Can your application form be opened and filled out using any type of device, including laptop, phone and tablet?
- Do people need a printer?
- Could someone with no experience of filling in application forms work out what to do?

If applicants have questions, they should be able to speak to someone who knows about the job and has experience of supporting disabled people. This could be in person, on the telephone or by video call.

If your application process is difficult, people may find it hard to speak up about this. Involving people in the design and testing of the process can help make your recruitment more accessible.

Interviews and alternatives

For experts with lived experience, an interview can be exclusive due to the nature of how they communicate and experience the world.

“I find it hard to ‘sell myself’. I’m much better explaining what skills and experience my colleagues have. I’m not great at doing that for myself. It is hard to sell the skills my autism gives me when the neurotypical world does not see these things as strengths.”

Employers may need to consider alternative means of exploring someone's compatibility for a role. The use of informal discussions, one to one or in a group, shadowing or simulation experiences of co-delivering training may also be appropriate.

It is important to make the interview a way of offering genuine opportunities for people to show what they can bring to the role. There is little point in a process that allows those good at doing interviews to be successful but loses people who would be effective trainers.

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Here are some things that employers can do to make a job interview more accessible.

- Think about where people are travelling from. Consider how long it will take for them to arrive by public transport before you decide the time of day for their interview.
- Be clear about where people need to go, how to get there and who to report to. Include a photograph of the room where the interview will take place.
- Send questions in advance so interviewees can prepare.
- Allow plenty of time for preparation for their interview. Consider how much preparation is needed for what you are asking people to do.
- Keep the number of people involved in the interview to the minimum needed.
- Tell candidates who will be on the panel and include photographs so they know who to expect.
- Plan how you will help people who might be stressed and exhausted by their travel to relax and prepare when they arrive at the interview.
- Ask people well in advance about the reasonable adjustments they require. Remember to ask about any sensory adjustments they may need. Listen carefully and make them in good time. People are the experts on their own needs.
- Tests or practical activities that form part of any interview should be accessible and relevant to the job. Do not make any assumptions that are discriminatory.
- Ask one question at a time. If you need to ask about something with a number of parts, wait until you have heard the answer to the first part of the question before asking about the next.
- Consider whether you need to provide questions visually as well as verbally.
- Allow someone to bring a supporter or advocate along.
- Give people time to process the question before replying.
- Pay attention to the layout of the room and how close the interviewer will be to the person being interviewed.
- Leave behind all assumptions about 'good candidates' displaying 'positive body language'.
- Allow people to use alternative communication methods.

Supporting people with their new roles

Employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) defines a reasonable adjustment as a change that must be made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to:

- a job applicant's disability when applying for a job
- an employee's disability when doing their job

Employers are responsible for supporting their staff if they become physically or emotionally unwell during the training. Reasonable adjustments could mean making changes to:

- the workplace and environment
- the equipment or services provided (both current or new services) – for example, providing a screen reader
- the ways things are done, such as processes that people are expected to follow
- how information is provided – for example, ensuring that it is in an accessible format
- how you communicate to meet the individual's needs
- how other colleagues communicate and whether they need to adapt their communication styles

Reasonable adjustments do not have to be complex or costly. The person involved should be central to the discussions and decision-making around this. Access to Work (page 21) can work alongside an employer to put reasonable adjustments in place for an employee.

“I was off sick with work-related stress because my employer would not make reasonable adjustments. I left in the end and now I never use them to give me a job reference because I know it will look bad, as if it was my fault. That's not fair.”

Everyone needs support when they start a new job, including people with a learning disability and autistic people. Support needs to be flexible and individual. Employers need to understand the support that people need can change over time. People might need less support at some times, and then more support later on.

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The job might be different every day. For example, when co-delivering The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training, the material may stay the same, but how each training group reacts to it will be dynamic and different every time.

Expert with lived experience co-trainers will need the right support to feel comfortable and confident in their role. It is important to support people to stay safe in training sessions. Talking about bad experiences can be hard and upsetting. All support should be person-centred.

It is best that employers take a personalised approach to the level and type of support someone needs, understanding that this will change over time. People themselves are the experts on what solutions will work best for them. Regular reviews help to give people real-time feedback and to understand their own performance. This gives employers the opportunity to say if something is wrong and explain what needs to change. Reviews support people to stay motivated.

Some suggestions for flexible support are:

- Regular check-ins with the new starter. These can become less frequent as the person gains confidence in their role.
- Developing co-working relationships between trainers where they regularly work as a team.
- Shadowing a colleague at first, and slowly using their skills and testing out the role.
- A briefing before the session, checks during session breaks and a session debrief can be supportive.
- Access to the same organisational HR and wellbeing support for non-salaried people as any other employee.
- Access to training and development opportunities.
- Changing how training material is presented.
- Mentorship for new starters:
 - Match them well, and it can be an ongoing relationship, to help the person grow and develop.
 - It is a learning opportunity for the mentor too.
 - It builds capacity in the organisation.
 - Ask the person what works for them.

“An employer needs to understand my autism to know what I am good at. I can focus on one task really well, but I can’t multi-task. If I get distracted it is hard.”

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Creating an inclusive culture

Every organisation will be different to work for. It is hard for new starters to get to know the ways different employers want to do things – especially the aspects that cannot be seen, such as how people tend to speak to each other.

“I have been finished a couple of times for making mistakes. If I had got the right support at work I would not have made those mistakes.”

Help people to understand the culture of your organisation. Help them to fit in.

Think about the following questions in relation to your organisation:

- How are relationships formed?
- Do colleagues socialise?
- Are the organisation's policies accessible?
- How do people understand the policy and culture around things such as attending appointments for themselves or their children?
- Are there any aspects of the company culture that could be inaccessible? Do not get trapped in the mindset of 'this is how we have always done things'. Be prepared to adapt and change so new people feel included and welcome.
- What proof is required from people about their circumstances?
- How do meetings work?
- How is confidentiality handled?
- How much is compassion a part of your organisation's culture?
- How is change managed in the organisation?
- How are staff supported through the change?
- What will be put in place to support autistic employees and those with a learning disability to understand and cope with the change?

“Everyone needs a bit of time off sometimes, like when my mum died. You need job support at times like that.”

People with a learning disability and autistic people should be valued and seen as assets to the organisation.

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Accreditation schemes like 'Disability Confident' can help employers continue to think about what they need to do to support disabled staff. However, it is important that whole teams receive training in disability awareness. Just having the accreditation does not mean that the organisation is good to work for or that other staff understand the issue.

“In one job, my colleagues made fun of me – they said I was too slow at my job. They said the mop could work faster than me. This bullying affected my confidence and self-esteem. I left and ended up doing voluntary work to try and rebuild my confidence. It was scary to look for another job.”

Employers need to make sure people know how to speak up about something that is not right. Accessible whistleblowing and grievance procedures are important for inclusion and to prevent ableism. Providing support during the process and afterwards creates an open culture where people feel safe to speak up.

Access to Work

Access to Work is a government scheme that can help someone get or stay in work if they have a physical or mental health condition or disability. The support a person receives will depend on their needs. Through Access to Work, people can apply for:

- a grant to help pay for practical support with their work
- advice about managing their mental health at work
- money to pay for communication support at job interviews

The employer has a legal responsibility to make reasonable adjustments. There is no formula for how much the organisation should pay towards the support someone needs. Understanding how the Access to Work scheme can work alongside the reasonable adjustments made by the employer can help reduce any anxiety about the possible costs of reasonable adjustments.

Essential employer considerations

This section explores how employers can make sure the opportunities they offer to people are accessible in a way that does not jeopardise their benefits.

Getting it right first time

It is important that employers build awareness of how a change in a person's circumstances can affect their benefits. This is significant for whether or not people will feel able to apply for opportunities

Employers who know or reasonably believe that people need support to manage their finances have a legal duty of care to direct people to get advice and independent support. This is so they fully understand the decisions they are making and how that might affect their financial situation. This should be done well in advance, to give both the individual and organisation time to consider any implications and explore potential and flexible solutions.

Alternative means of receiving payment

Self-employment means a person works for themselves. You can find the [HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\) website definition of self-employment](#).

Self-employed people are responsible for paying their own tax and national insurance. Co-trainers and employers can check whether the work they do is employed or self-employed at the [HMRC website](#).

Service user involvement. People can offer their perspectives of being autistic or having a learning disability through service user involvement.

The Department of Work and Pensions has a full description of service users that applies to all benefits.

Check all information online through the [GOV.UK website](#).

Interactions of payments and benefits

Understanding how potential payments could interact with a person's benefits is important. Each person's personal circumstances are different. People in receipt of state benefits must keep to their benefit conditions. Check online through the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk) and ask the person to contact the office dealing with their claim. The person might need your help to do this.

A person who is offered employment or an alternative option for receiving payment will need support to get expert advice or there is a real risk of their benefits being sanctioned. Organisations must ensure people have access to expert welfare rights advice so that they can make an informed decision.

A person must fully understand how the employment or alternative offered might affect their personal circumstances including any benefits they currently claim. They should also check what the tax and national insurance effects will be.

To get this advice, employers will need to tell people:

- if the job will be permanent or temporary
- how many hours they will be working
- the payment for the work
- any expenses they will need to meet if they take the job – for example, parking and travel, childcare or meals away from home

It is best practice for expenses to be covered in advance so that the person does not have to spend their own money. For instance, travel tickets can be provided.

Responsibility for tax and national insurance

Responsibility for tax and national insurance is dependent on a person's personal circumstances. For more information look at the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

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Checking benefit conditions

Providing potential service users and their family carers and support workers with access to independent, reliable guidance on benefit conditions allows an informed decision to be made.

There are different benefit groups, each with different benefit conditions. For more information look at the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

A local Citizens Advice may be willing to set up a special service for people who are considering involvement. Expert welfare rights advisers can advise on earning limits and procedures to be followed.

An arrangement with a Citizens Advice is likely to require funding and needs to be planned well in advance.

Essential considerations

- Employers should be careful how to engage people.
 - Contractors and self-employed people will be required to work within the HMRC off-payroll working regulations.
- Engagement must be
 - open to all relevant groups
 - accessible
 - adjusted to people's needs
- Consider named people to support transition into the workplace and have key 'check-in points'.
- Inductions must be accessible.
- All people involved in training should have person-centred support.
- Professional development opportunities should be available to all staff.
- Workplaces and training venues must be accessible.
- A person-centred review of each person's personal circumstances and implications for benefits and employment must be undertaken.
- Employers have a duty of care to vulnerable people.

Where to find help

Local community and voluntary sector (CVS) organisations

Local CVS organisations can offer vital support with tax and benefits regulations. Employers may wish to develop a relationship with a local Council for Voluntary Service organisation that will be able to work flexibly to enable people with a learning disability, autistic people, and their families to be involved in a transparent and valued way.

Jobcentre Plus

- Jobcentre Plus customers will have access to a work coach who can support them to access training, and voluntary and paid work. Those receiving benefits should take advice from their work coach on whether their benefits will be affected.
- Jobcentre Plus can provide additional support to employers through links with local Disability Employment Advisers. Employers can contact their local Disability Employment Adviser by calling 0800 1690178.

Access to Work

- [Access to Work](#) is a discretionary scheme that can provide grants for disabled people in paid employment, or undertaking government-supported internships, who need to provide reasonable adjustments above an employer's statutory duties.
- It is useful for the employer and employee to build a good working relationship with their local Access to Work team.
- The employer should offer good support to the disabled employee during the process of applying to Access to Work, which is led by the employee.
- Additional support costs which could be funded by Access to Work include:
 - special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help the employee do things like answer the phone or go to meetings
 - help for the paid employee to get to and from work
- More examples can be found on the [access to help webpage](#).

Disability Confident employers

The [Disability Confident](#) employer scheme was developed by employers and disabled people's representatives as a rigorous but easily accessible process. It enables employers to think differently about disability. It lets them take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

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More guidance to help you

DWP Guidance – [Employing disabled people and people with health conditions](#)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation – [Employing people with learning disabilities: a handbook for employers](#)

National Development Team for Inclusion – [An Employers Guide to Supported Employment](#)

NHS England – [Working with our Patient and Public Voice Partners – Reimbursing expenses and paying involvement payments](#)

Social Care Institute for Excellence – [Paying people who receive benefits – Co-production and involvement](#)

Mencap – [Employer guidance factsheets](#)

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Final messages

Transparent, equal and meaningful involvement takes time to plan and deliver.

People need time to consider the implications and plan around existing commitments. Ideally, people should be offered a role at least 6 weeks before their involvement starts. This will ensure equality of opportunity and time to seek advice where necessary.

Special thanks

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