

Learning Disability

What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is a life-long, intellectual impairment which can make it harder for people with the condition to learn new skills, process complex information or cope independently with daily living. People with this condition may also have limited literacy and numeracy skills.

Learning disabilities range from mild to severe. Down's syndrome is probably the most widely known example of a learning disability. Autism is also considered a learning disability.

Some employers have identified there is a great pool of talent to be had employing a person with a learning disability. It has a significant impact on their workforce and creates a more diverse and inclusive work environment, more representative of modern society.

How might this affect someone at the interview process or in the workplace?

Getting and holding down a job is very challenging for people who have a learning disability and traditional recruitment processes are simply not suitable.

As people with learning disabilities can take longer to process information traditional application and interview processes are not the best way of allowing them to highlight their skills and abilities. Simple, straight forward questions are best – ideally, they would be allowed to see these in advance so that they had time to prepare.

For example, instead of a traditional interview a short work placement or work trial might be an option where a person can become familiar with a job and practically demonstrate their capabilities.

People with learning disabilities need clear, simple instructions, a structured day and routine. They take longer to adapt to change and need to be supported through this.

Traditionally people with a learning disability often applied for entry level positions but this does not have to be the case.

Interview and Workplace adjustments

Using a supported employment service, such as Into Work, to advocate on the person's behalf will increase their chances of employment.

Into Work Employment Advisers take time to get to know a person's skills, abilities and talents. This is the key to success. Once this relationship has been formed the Employment Adviser will think about matching the person to suitable roles within a wide range of organisations.

Into Work provides supported employment services to people with disabilities or long-term health conditions. For more information visit our website or contact us on 0131 475 2600

Examples of adjustments employers could consider:

- Providing information in accessible formats, e.g. easy read English or using pictures of symbols.
- Meeting employment advisers to give them a full understanding of all aspects of the job. This would give the adviser an idea of the level of skills required and how the tasks could be broken down.
- Consider the possibility of Job Carving. This is a term for customising job duties, e.g. to create specialist job roles thus freeing up the time of specialist staff; swapping job duties to make the most of individual skills.
- Making the interview process more informal or provide the interview questions in advance so that the interviewee has longer to prepare.
- Allowing an Employment Adviser to sit in on interviews or group tasks.
- Allowing an Employment Adviser to be present at interviews to assist with any written tests.
- Setting up a work placement for a prospective candidate to allow them to get to know the job and demonstrate their skills.
- Offering advice to the candidate on what they should wear to their interview
- Arranging a work-site visit beforehand to check out the environment.
- Ask the interview panel if they would consider assessing the person through a short work-trial.

Once someone secures employment Into Work can provide the following support:

- Provide an Employment Adviser to act as a job coach in the initial stages of employment. The job coach will break down the task down into trainable components.
- Support the employee's colleagues by providing disability awareness training or suggest workplace adjustments as the job evolves.
- Build in a longer induction period for the individual giving them longer to pick up the tasks.
- Help to identify a work place mentor or buddy.
- Help establish a good structure to the person's day with predictability and consistency with their routine.
- Build in regular feedback/supervision sessions providing feedback to the person about their progress.

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