



**Understanding disability in the  
workplace**



# Do's and Don'ts of this session



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## By the end of this session, you will have:

- A better understand of disability in the workplace.
- An appreciation of the types of disabilities people live with.
- An idea of how to approach and prepare for a difficult conversation with a staff member who lives with a disability.
- A number of tools/strategies to enable staff members you manage or work with to shine.



# Who's Here

Name & Location

What are you looking for  
from this workshop





You may have heard  
of the **TRUST**  
**EQUATION**, but what  
about the **PIGGY**  
**BANK OF TRUST**



When I mention the word **DISABILITY** what comes into your mind and what might enter the mind of someone not quite so understanding?



# Key Points About Disability

**An overview of disability types and individual considerations in the workplace**

Visible and invisible disabilities  
Physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory impairments  
Long-term conditions and neurodiversity  
Understand individual differences, avoid assumptions  
Adjustments: soft and hard reasonable aids  
Conditions may vary over time

# Key Points About Disability

## Invisible Disabilities

Invisible disabilities, like chronic pain or neurodiversity, may not be apparent. It's essential to recognise their impact and avoid assumptions, promoting awareness and understanding in the workplace.

## Visible Disabilities

Visible disabilities are those that can be seen, such as physical impairments. They often prompt immediate recognition and understanding from others regarding the individual's needs.

**Never assume you know what someone needs, always ask.**

# Key Points About Disability

## Visible Disabilities

Visible disabilities are easily identifiable physical impairments, such as mobility issues or visual impairments, which often shape societal perceptions and accessibility considerations in various environments.

## Cognitive Impairments

Cognitive impairments involve challenges in learning, memory and problem-solving, necessitating flexible approaches and support systems to foster understanding and engagement within professional settings.

## Invisible Disabilities

Invisible disabilities include conditions like chronic pain or mental health disorders, which may not be immediately apparent but significantly impact daily functioning and quality of life for individuals facing them.

## Emotional Impairments

Emotional impairments pertain to conditions affecting emotional regulation, such as anxiety or depression, which may require supportive measures and workplace adjustments to promote mental well-being.

## Physical Impairments

Physical impairments affect mobility, dexterity, or bodily functions, often requiring specific accommodations, such as accessible workspaces or assistive technology, to ensure effective participation and inclusion.

## Neurodiversity

Neurodiverse conditions encompass a range of neurological differences, including autism and ADHD, highlighting the need for tailored strategies and recognition of individual strengths in the workplace.

**Individuals may live with more than one condition which may change day to day**

# Disabilities could include

## Physical & Systemic

- Severe disfigurements, skin conditions
- Mobility/motor disability (limbs, back, neck)
- Long-term conditions (Cancer, heart issues)
- Breathing issues (Asthma, bronchitis)
- Digestive/Organ issues (Diabetes, liver)
- Progressive conditions (e.g., MS)

## Cognitive & Developmental

- Specific learning difficulties
- **Autism** Spectrum Disorders
- Dyspraxia & **Dyslexia**
- **ADHD** (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

## Sensory & Neurological

- Visual Impairments (Blindness, low vision)
- Hearing Impairments (Deafness, hard of hearing)
- Epilepsy & Seizure disorders
- Sensory processing issues

## Mental Health

- Depression & Anxiety disorders
- Severe stress ("bad nerves")
- Phobias & Panic disorders
- Other nervous disorders



What might be the benefits  
of having someone in your  
team who lives with a  
**DISABILITY?**



# Quiz time

# Quiz time

## Question 1

How many people of working age in the UK report having a disability?

A – 5.8 million

B – 10 million

C – 8.6 million



UK Parliament Research Briefing  
Disability statistics (June 2024)

# Quiz time

## Question 2

What percentage of disabled people are born with a disability?

A – 50%

B – around 80%

C – less than 20%



UK Government Website

Activity Alliance / Disability Sport UK

# Quiz time

## Question 3

How many people see disabled people as less productive than non-disabled people?

A – 1 in 10

B – 1 in 6

C – 4 in 10



Scope

National Centre for Social Research

# Types Of Discrimination

## Direct Discrimination

When somebody is treated less favourably because of their disability

## Indirect Discrimination

Applying a workplace policy or practice that puts disabled people (including the individual) at a substantial disadvantage.

## Failure to Make Reasonable Adjustments

The legal duty to make changes to remove a disadvantage caused by a policy, a physical feature or lack of an auxiliary aid/service.

# 10 minute Breakout Room

What might we need to consider when organising an event so that we don't discriminate?

Face to face & virtual



# A 6 point approach



# Starting a confident, meaningful and productive conversation

## Step 1 – State and Scene

Make sure you are prepared and both of you are in a rational state.  
Create a safe and professional environment for the conversation.



## Step 2 – Safe start

Using a coaching style start the conversation with some form of safe questioning that creates conversation.



## Step 3 – Share the Facts

Using a coaching style focus on observable behavior or facts rather than assumptions or judgments.



## Step 4 – Solve Together

Discuss options for moving forward.  
Agree on clear next steps, responsibilities and timelines.

It all starts with TRUST



What should we do if  
someone at work confides  
in us that they've just been  
diagnosed with a  
**disability?**



# Some examples of a reasonable adjustment could be

## Soft (non-structural, low-cost) reasonable adjustments

- Allowing extra time to process information or respond in meetings
- Providing written follow-ups after verbal instructions or discussions
- Adjusting start and finish times to accommodate medication, fatigue or travel needs
- Providing additional supervision, mentoring or coaching support
- Recognising and valuing different working styles and strengths
- Allowing the employee to choose where they sit for comfort, focus or accessibility
- Offering quiet zones or calm working spaces to reduce sensory overload

# Some examples of a reasonable adjustment could be

## Hard (physical or structural) reasonable adjustments

- Adjusting desk heights or providing adjustable workstations
- Adding tactile flooring or contrasting colours for people with visual impairments
- Supplying ergonomic chairs, keyboards or specialist mouse devices
- Installing anti-glare screens or larger monitors for people with visual sensitivities
- Screen readers, magnification software or Braille displays
- Redesigning tasks to remove unnecessary physical barriers
- Providing personal assistants or support workers (funded via Access to Work where applicable)

## 10 minute Breakout Room

You have a staff member who lives with **ADHD** or **Dyslexia** and they're struggling with workload and the way you're providing detailed feedback.

How would you change things or what reasonable adjustments would you consider with your colleague?



# How can we make sure we are being **inclusive**?



Plan inclusive social events

Offer team conversations about disability

Challenging discriminatory behaviour

Lead by example and watch our own bias

# Some Great Support Options

**Access to Work** - can help people get or stay in work if they have a physical or mental health condition or disability.

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

**Manual Of Me** - a powerful framework which helps you discover and communicate your working preferences, motivations and needs, so we can all work better together. <https://www.manualof.me>

**Disability Confidence Scheme** - a practical guide for line managers on recruiting, managing and developing people with a disability or health condition. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-and-cipd-guide-for-line-managers-on-employing-people-with-a-disability-or-health-condition>

**Larger companies may also offer an Occupational Health Service and provide a Disability Passport scheme.**

# Top Tips To Being Disability Aware

Remember everyone is different

Building trust is key

Never assume you know what someone needs always ask

Continue the communication