

**NIACE** The National Voice  
for Lifelong Learning

# Employer Toolkit

**Supporting accessible and  
inclusive Apprenticeships**

**May 2014**

Funded by



Skills Funding  
Agency



**Apprenticeships**

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# Foreword

Apprenticeships are a vital part of the government's strategy to create a highly skilled workforce and the current programme of reform is designed to ensure that the Apprenticeship pathway has parity of esteem with higher education among school leavers. Apprenticeships for adults are similarly a key part of the government's Apprenticeship policy – enabling adults to change or develop their careers throughout their working lives.

NIACE is keen that government policy recognises the different needs of those who may be attracted by the Apprenticeship route. The low participation rate of disabled apprentices was identified in the Little Report,<sup>1</sup> which showed that Apprenticeships for adults and young people with a declared learning difficulty or disability (LDD) have fallen from 11 per cent in 2008–09 to 8.4 per cent in 2010–11.

This Employer Toolkit and the accompanying report were commissioned by the Skills Funding Agency to encourage employers to hire disabled apprentices, by providing employers with relevant information, resources and practical assistance to diversify their workforce. The toolkit has been developed with the active participation of employers. The case studies included in this toolkit will be of particular value, as they clearly demonstrate the business benefits employers have realised by recruiting disabled apprentices, whether they're a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) like Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker, or a multinational such as Barclays Bank.

We know that employers can feel worried or even scared about taking on disabled apprentices; they're concerned they won't be able to provide enough support, about the law and about what adjustments they might have to make. This toolkit attempts to raise the degree of employers' 'disability confidence' and to demonstrate that, once employers adopt measures for increasing their workforce's diversity, significant business benefits can result.

This Employer Toolkit is also available online at [www.employer-toolkit.org.uk](http://www.employer-toolkit.org.uk)



Carol Taylor, OBE, Director of Development and Research, NIACE, May 2014

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# Introduction

Welcome to the NIACE Employer Toolkit. This toolkit is designed for employers that want to develop a more inclusive and accessible Apprenticeship offer. It provides practical information, sources of support and inspirational case studies of employers who have benefited from hiring and supporting disabled apprentices.

NIACE has developed the content in consultation with a range of businesses and experts in this field. We thank the following organisations for their support:

- [Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker Ltd](#)
- [The Ambassador Theatre Group](#)
- [Ambitious About Autism](#)
- [Barclays Bank PLC](#)
- [Business Disability Forum](#)
- [Care Solutions Group](#)
- [Connexions Buckinghamshire](#)
- [DeafinitEquality](#)
- [Dyslexia Foundation](#)
- [Enable Housing Association](#)
- [Leicester City Council](#)
- [Luton Adult Learning](#)
- [Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust](#)
- [National Theatre](#)
- [New Horizons](#)
- [Novartis UK](#)
- Peter Little (OBE)
- [Police Federation](#)
- [Tate](#)
- [Tottenham Hotspur](#)
- [Training Plus Merseyside \(tpm\)](#)
- Visually Impaired and Blind people's Education Network (VIBE)

We'd love to hear your thoughts or feedback on this toolkit. Please send us any suggestions or comments using this [contact form](#).

## Why hire a disabled apprentice?



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There are more than 11 million disabled people in Great Britain, of whom nearly six million are of working age.<sup>2</sup> By hiring and supporting disabled apprentices, employers find that they are better able to extend the pool of high-quality applicants available to them, engage with the widest possible consumer base, and have a workforce that reflects the diverse range of customers they serve.

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<sup>2</sup> Office for Disability Issues (2014) <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/disability-facts-and-figures.php#g>

## It makes good business sense

Employing disabled staff helps businesses become more accessible to the ten million disabled customers in the UK who have a combined annual spending power of £80 billion.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that 82 per cent of disabled customers in the UK took their business to a more accessible competitor in 2011.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, making adjustments for a disabled apprentice helps employers to make their workplaces accessible to other disabled candidates (often with exactly the talents and skills businesses want) and to existing employees who an employer has already invested in and will want to retain if they develop a disability or long-term medical condition. This, combined with the fact that the average Apprenticeship increases business productivity by £214 per week through increased profits, lower prices and better products,<sup>5</sup> demonstrates that hiring disabled apprentices makes good business sense.

## It helps employers capture and retain the right talent

Recruiting disabled apprentices and employees can create a more diverse, creative and innovative workforce. By discouraging or inadvertently discriminating against disabled applicants, you may be missing the best candidates for your vacancies.

*“It’s definitely helped us to capture and maintain the best talent for our business.”*

Leicester City Council

## It improves accessibility and support for other staff and customers

Many employers find that the additional support and equipment or changes in practice they implement for disabled apprentices or employees result in more comprehensive support for and engagement with customers and other staff. Often, the measures and adjustments put in place for disabled apprentices reflect good practice in supporting all employees. The employers we consulted in the development of this toolkit found that the cost of [reasonable adjustments](#) for most disabled apprentices was negligible or could be covered by the government's Access to Work scheme. Furthermore, 65 per cent of employers rated the financial effect of workplace adjustments to be cost neutral and 20 per cent identified an overall financial benefit.<sup>6</sup>

*“Our provision to support apprentices with learning differences has improved our teaching practice with all of learners and the overall quality of our provision.”*

Training Plus Merseyside (tpm)



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## It improves staff productivity, retention and absence rates

There is evidence that disabled people tend to be loyal and productive employees and apprentices.<sup>7</sup> Research documents comparable productivity, lower accident rates and higher job retention rates between employees and apprentices with disabilities and a company's general workforce. In fact, research carried out in Australia suggests that 90 per cent of disabled employees record productivity rates equal to or greater than that of other workers.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See for example United Nations (2007) *Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities*; Unger, D. (2002) *Employers' Attitudes Toward Persons with Disabilities in the Workforce: Myths or Realities?*

<sup>8</sup> Australian Network on Disability (2010)  
[http://media.wix.com/ugd/596a90\\_a3a5346f6f8a5296a9bad7a07f4ec970.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/596a90_a3a5346f6f8a5296a9bad7a07f4ec970.pdf)

# Hints and tips

These hints and tips are designed to ensure that you are adopting best practice when hiring and supporting a disabled apprentice.

## Recruitment

### Make their role genuine

It is important that disabled apprentices are given a genuine role with responsibilities, tasks and deadlines that address your business needs.

### Think about the job description

Only include requirements in the job description or person specification if they are essential for a candidate to complete an Apprenticeship. By including non-essential requirements, you may inadvertently be discriminating against disabled candidates. Therefore, it is important that you consider whether candidates really need to have certain qualifications, skills or expertise before including them as an essential requirement.

### Let disabled people know that you welcome applications from them

It is important to make it clear in your recruitment materials that you would welcome applications from disabled candidates. If you are a [‘Two Ticks’](#) employer, [an Investor in Diversity](#) or a [Mindful Employer](#), then say so in your job adverts. If your corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities demonstrate your commitment to disabled staff, then say so in your recruitment materials. Similarly, if you have and take pride in a diverse workforce, say so. You could include one or two monitoring statistics to show this includes disabled people. In addition, it is important to include information on how applicants can declare a disability.

### Provide recruitment materials in alternative formats

All of your recruitment materials should be written concisely, in [Plain English](#) and in an [accessible font and size](#) to reduce the need for alternative format versions. Making your recruitment materials available as Word documents (rather than PDF files) will make them more accessible to people who use assistive technology. However, some candidates may require you to provide information in formats other than text. If you have made people feel safe to declare that they are disabled they

may contact you to request your recruitment materials be provided to them in alternative formats.

### **Work with partners to advertise vacancies**

In order to reach disabled candidates you may want to work with local and/or national disabilities organisations, education and training organisations (such as the [National Apprenticeship Service](#)), training providers and voluntary or community organisations, to advertise and promote your Apprenticeship vacancies to as wide a network and range of communities as possible.

### **Make your interviews and assessments inclusive and accessible**

Ensure that you offer to make reasonable adjustments at interview and assessment stages. For more information on what this might include, visit the [Equalities and Human Rights Commission website](#). If you have made people feel safe to declare that they are disabled they may describe in their application the reasonable adjustments they will need at interview and in assessments.

## Induction and initial support



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### Speak to your apprentice

Do not assume that all apprentices with a particular disability need the same type and level of support. As with all apprentices, line managers should have a one-to-one conversation with the apprentice to find out what in-work support they would find useful. However, it is important to remember that an apprentice is likely to be a young person in their first job role. As a result, they may not be aware of the types of support available, what they might need or what would help them in their role. The [descriptions of disabilities](#) included in this toolkit may help you and your apprentice to identify the types of support which will be most useful to them in their role.

### Use Access to Work

The government's Access to Work scheme can cover the costs of many adjustments or additional types of support which a disabled apprentice may require. Find out more in GOV.UK's [Employer's guide to Access to Work](#).

## Make your apprentice feel part of your team

This can be particularly important for apprentices who have difficulty navigating the social world, for example those who have mental health problems and/or learning difficulties like autism. However, many apprentices are likely to be young people in their first job and it is therefore important to involve them in meetings, team decisions and social events, whether they are disabled or not, to help them develop their confidence and communication skills.



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## Provide a mentor

Allocate a mentor to the apprentice from within their team. This gives them a key person they can go to for support or help with any issues. If you already have disabled employees, see if they would welcome a chance to mentor your apprentice.

## Seek external support

For some apprentices, for example those with more complex needs, it may help to work with external support agencies which can provide additional support to the apprentice and their colleagues within the workplace. For an example of how this can work well, see the [Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust case study](#).

## Ongoing support and progression

### Have regular catch ups

Regular meetings with line managers and mentors give disabled apprentices plenty of opportunities to discuss any problems they're experiencing and allow managers to identify any additional support needs. However, make sure that your apprentice would welcome this support before putting it in place. It is important to remember that an apprentice is likely to be a young person in their first job role and, as a result, may not know what support is available and may still be learning to manage their disability in the workplace. The [descriptions of disabilities](#) included in this toolkit may help you and your apprentice to identify the types of support which will be most useful.



### Support apprentices to progress

It is important to think about the long-term outcomes of an Apprenticeship and what your apprentice would like to move on to after they have completed their programme. One of the key barriers often experienced by disabled people is that they are given entry level jobs but then get overlooked for further training and/or promotion opportunities. Thinking about long-term goals from the start can help you to build in support for apprentices to progress onto full-time work, further learning or a different activity after their Apprenticeship.

### **Maintain links with your internal HR team (if you have one)**

HR colleagues can support you to make reasonable adjustments and tailor the Apprenticeship programme to your apprentice's needs.

### **Provide support for line managers and mentors**

Mentors may need someone they can go to for advice on how to support a disabled apprentice. They may find some training or a key contact useful. For example, [Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\)](#) has produced a very useful resource for line managers on best practice in supporting the mental health of all employees.

### **Showcase apprentices' work**

By demonstrating the achievements of your disabled apprentices to other employees and employers you can help to break down commonly held stereotypes and misconceptions about the capabilities of disabled people in the workplace. [Luton Adult Learning](#) held an open evening to showcase the work of their disabled apprentices which demonstrated their achievements to employers and their families.

# Descriptions of disabilities



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## Introduction

NIACE has included this section of the toolkit in response to direct feedback from employers who indicated that they would find some descriptions of disabilities helpful. The descriptions include potential strengths of apprentices with these disabilities, examples of the types of support that they might find useful, and details of organisations which can help employers to implement any additional assistance.

The descriptions included in this section of the toolkit are **not** intended to be considered as providing a one-size-fits-all approach to how best to support an apprentice with a particular disability in the workplace. Some conditions or disabilities can fluctuate, while others may be static or progressive. Also, some apprentices may have more than one disability but this should not act as a barrier to their participation in the workplace. It is important to see each apprentice as an individual and regularly review the support they have in place.

It is helpful to remember that disabled people are not defined by their disabilities in isolation. It is perfectly possible, of course, for a disabled person to experience barriers relating to other protected characteristics that they might have, including their race, gender, or age, for example. This may lead to disabled people experiencing 'double discrimination'. The best way to address these issues is to engage the disabled apprentice in meaningful dialogue during each stage of their employee journey, just as you would with other colleagues.

**It is crucial that line managers or other appropriate employees have a one-to-one conversation with a disabled apprentice to find out whether their disability or long-term and/or progressive health condition will affect their experience of work and, if so, what support they would find useful.**

The descriptions of disabilities have been listed in alphabetical order.

## Apprentices with autism



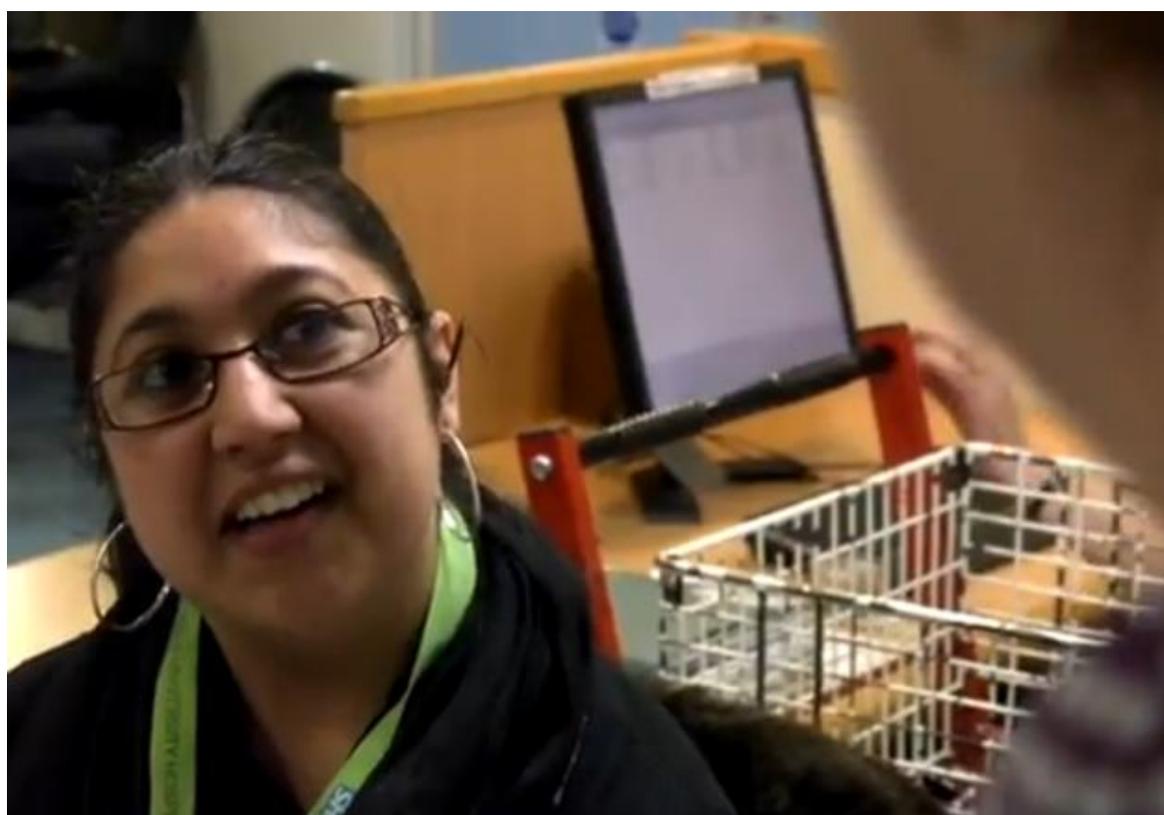
The common criteria for the identification of autism are based on difficulties in social interaction, communication and a lack of flexibility in thinking. Autism is often described as a spectrum which covers a wide range of people and includes Asperger's.

### Strengths of apprentices with autism

People with autism tend to be highly focused and hard working. Some of the abilities often shared by people with autism include:

- being honest and upfront with their views and about their needs;
- being passionate about their special interests and work;
- being focused on the job at hand with little interest in office politics;
- an excellent memory and concentration; and
- completing tasks with high levels of accuracy and attention to detail.

The types of support that will be useful for someone with autism will vary from person to person. It is therefore important for line managers to speak to apprentices about their experience of work and what support they find most useful and effective. However, it is important to remember that an apprentice is likely to be a young person in their first job role. As a result, they may not be aware of the types of support available, what they might need or what would help them in their role. The following examples of assistance may help you and your apprentice to identify the types of support which will be most useful to them in their role.



### **Ways employers can support apprentices with autism**

By providing some additional support at the start of their Apprenticeship, you can be confident that apprentices with autism will make a valuable contribution to your workplace. You can support apprentices with autism to reach their full potential by:

- appointing a member of staff as a ‘buddy’ or ‘mentor’ that your apprentice can go to with any questions or concerns;
- using literal language and being very precise about what you mean;
- using carefully worded and unambiguous questions to check your apprentice’s understanding of tasks;

- breaking tasks down into checklists that your apprentice can work through independently; and
- establishing work routines early on and giving your apprentice advance warning of any changes to this.

### Key support organisations

The following organisations can provide helpful information and advice if you are looking to hire an apprentice with autism. They are listed alphabetically.

- [The Autism Services Directory](#) has a useful UK-wide directory of employment services to support employees with autism.
- [The National Autistic Society](#) runs training courses for managers and colleagues of employees with autism.

## Apprentices who are blind or partially sighted

There are almost 80,000 registered blind and partially sighted people of working age in the UK.<sup>9</sup> This is a huge pool of potential applicants for employers to tap into, especially considering that these individuals are equally able to do many of the same jobs as sighted people.

### Strengths of apprentices who are blind or partially sighted

Apprentices who are blind or partially sighted have the same range of skills and abilities as the population as a whole. However, they also give employers valuable experience in making a range of reasonable adjustments for people who are blind or partially sighted, which will result in their organisations being more accessible in the long run. This will send out a clear message that employers' organisations are positive, flexible, disability-aware and reflect social diversity.

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<sup>9</sup> RNIB (2013) *Employing and Retaining a Blind or Partially Sighted Person: Guide for Small and Medium Enterprises*. At: [www.rnib.org.uk/sme](http://www.rnib.org.uk/sme)

## Ways employers can support apprentices who are blind or partially sighted

Apprentices who are blind or partially sighted might experience difficulty seeing ordinary newsprint, reading from a computer screen or clearly seeing someone's face from a short distance. Best-practice approaches to assist blind or partially sighted apprentices to excel in the workplace include:

- asking your apprentice what support or adaptations they find most useful;
- checking what font size and colour your apprentice needs for printed material;
- providing information in a digital format in advance of meetings, training, etc., so your apprentice can use assistive software to access information when needed;
- providing specialist technology, such as large monitors, adapted keyboards, screen readers or voice recognition software, if appropriate; and
- providing visual awareness training for staff and building this into the induction process for all new starters. Your apprentice and any other blind or partially sighted staff should be involved in identifying the training needed, commissioning the organisation/individual which delivers it and/or delivering part of the training themselves if they so wish.

The types of support that would be useful for blind or partially sighted apprentices vary from person to person. It is therefore important for you to ask your apprentice about the ways in which their disability affects their experience of work and listen to what support they find most useful and effective.

## Key support organisations

The following organisations can provide helpful information and advice if you are looking to hire a blind or partially sighted apprentice. They are listed alphabetically.

- [Action for Blind People](#) offers visual awareness training for employers.
- [Blind in Business \(BIB\)](#) offers a range of services and resources for employers.
- The [European Blind Union \(EBU\)](#) has some interesting reports on employment issues for blind and partially sighted people.
- [The National Federation of the Blind](#) has some useful information for employers and links to other support organisations.
- The [Royal National Institute of Blind People \(RNIB\)](#) has published a [guide to employing blind and partially sighted people](#).

## Apprentices who are deaf or hard of hearing

Around 10 million people in the UK (one in six) have a hearing loss and more than 50 per cent of these people have experienced difficulties in accessing goods and services.<sup>10</sup> By being deaf aware, employers can open up their business to this huge number of potential customers.

### Strengths of apprentices who are deaf or hard of hearing

As well as having the same range of skills and abilities as the population as a whole, apprentices who are deaf or hard of hearing can:

- give employers the opportunity to find out if they already employ staff who know a little British Sign Language (BSL), have someone who is deaf or hard of hearing in their family and/or would like to learn BSL. This is an excellent skill for any organisation's customer-facing staff to have and will improve the accessibility of an organisation;
- give employers valuable experience about how to make a range of reasonable adjustments for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, resulting in their organisations being more accessible in the long run; and
- send out a clear message that your organisation is positive, flexible, deaf- and disability-aware and reflects social diversity.

### Ways employers can support apprentices who are deaf or hard of hearing

Many deaf people will not describe or consider themselves to be disabled. Therefore, it is best practice to refer to deaf and disabled people in recruitment materials, training, and so on.

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<sup>10</sup> Action on Hearing Loss. At: <http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/supporting-you/accreditations-assessments-and-training-for-businesses.aspx>

Communication with a deaf or hard of hearing apprentice may seem daunting at first, but this quickly becomes easier as colleagues get to know each other and find the best ways to communicate. Furthermore, technology is constantly changing and improving the way we communicate. Within the next year the Portable Sign Language Translator (PSLT) should be launched, which enables BSL speakers to use laptops to translate sign language into written text, and vice versa.

The cost of sign language communication support and other reasonable adjustments can be covered by the Access to Work scheme. You can get an indicative decision on whether an Access to Work application would be successful, and how long this process would take, before interviewing for an Apprenticeship position. Your Access to Work application should be informed by a conversation with your apprentice about what communication support they find most useful.

Induction training is particularly important for apprentices who have a hearing loss. This is the ideal opportunity for an apprentice to learn more about their roles and responsibilities, and the organisation's practices, procedures and expectations. You can make the induction process effective for an apprentice who is deaf or hard of hearing by:

- providing deaf awareness training for all staff who have no experience of working with people who are deaf or hard of hearing (the cost of this can be included in the application for [Access to Work](#) funding). Your apprentice and any other deaf staff should be involved in identifying the training needed, commissioning the organisation/individual which delivers it and/or delivering part of the training themselves if they so wish;
- including deaf awareness training as part of the induction process for all future staff (this can sometimes be paid for through Access to Work);
- ensuring your apprentice has the right communication support for their induction training (the cost of this can be included in the application for Access to Work funding);
- providing your apprentice with an induction programme covering what will happen and when, written in plain English (or communicated to the deaf or hard of hearing individual in sign language or their chosen method of communication);

- staggering or phasing the induction programme so that there is not a large amount of information provided to your apprentice at any one time; and
- appointing a member of staff who can communicate with your apprentice as a 'buddy' or 'mentor' who they can go to with any questions or concerns.

The types of support that will be useful for a deaf or hard of hearing apprentice will vary from person to person. It is important for line managers to ask apprentices about the ways in which their deafness or disability affects their experience of work and what support they find most useful and effective.

### **Key support organisations**

The following organisations can provide helpful information and advice if you are looking to hire a deaf or hard of hearing apprentice. They are listed alphabetically.

- [Action on Hearing Loss](#) offers services and training for businesses.
- [DeafinitEquality](#) provides consultancy and interpretation services, as well as deaf awareness training to organisations.
- [Heart of Deafness](#) undertakes various activities, including mystery shopper exercises and equality impact assessments, and promotes positive attitudes and perceptions of deaf people through deaf awareness.
- [Signature](#) advises and supports businesses to become more accessible to deaf and hard of hearing people.
- [The Plain English Campaign](#) provides free guides on how to write in plain English and avoid jargon.



## Apprentices with dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that affects memory and processing speed. This can impact on literacy development, mathematics, memory, organisation and sequencing skills to varying degrees. Dyslexia affects up to ten per cent of the UK population on some level and can affect anyone of any age and background.<sup>11</sup>

### Strengths of people with dyslexia

Dyslexic people are often highly creative thinkers who solve problems through visual imagery. Some of the common abilities shared by people with dyslexia include:

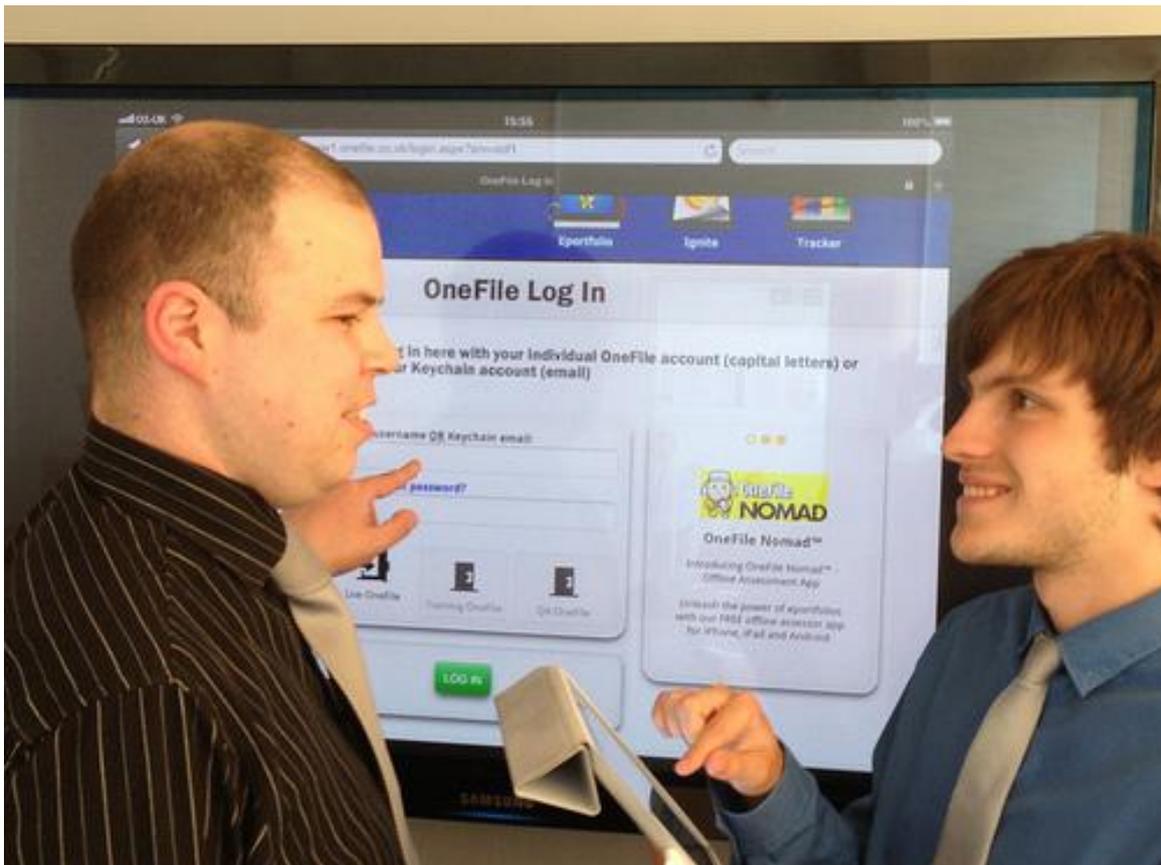
- being very creative and highly curious thinkers;
- having very effective people skills;
- the ability to develop innovative ways to solve complicated problems;
- being highly visual learners with vivid imaginations;

<sup>11</sup> Dyslexia Action, at: <https://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/whatisdyslexia>

- the ability to quickly identify how things are connected and work together; and
- being highly intuitive and insightful.

Employers who recognise this and provide appropriate support to apprentices with dyslexia will reap the benefit of these talents.

## Ways employers can support apprentices with dyslexia



© Training Plus Merseyside (tpm)

People with dyslexia can perform a range of complex tasks, yet may struggle with seemingly straightforward activities such as reading, telling the time or remembering instructions. Apprentices with dyslexia often only require minimal additional support, depending on how their disability affects their experience of work. This may include some of the following:

- allowing them to arrange their workstation in a way that helps them, for example setting up desk partitions or using a corner desk to minimise background noise and distractions within open-plan office settings, or placing visual/colourful reminders on desk partitions;

- using colour and imagery to highlight key points or important details;
- printing documents on coloured paper;
- over-learning (repeating a task in different ways) to help get the information into their long-term memory;
- providing an overview of tasks and ideas before going into detail;
- allowing them to work in blocks of time or offering a flexitime contract if they experience fatigue due to additional concentration required for reading and written tasks;
- appointing a member of staff as a 'buddy' or 'mentor' who the apprentice can go to with any questions or concerns;
- installing appropriate computer software that helps with reading and typing, for example, [Dragon NaturallySpeaking](#);
- providing access to a tablet device, with assistive apps, to support memory, organisation and spelling difficulties;
- encouraging the apprentice to use a phone or tablet to record visual instructions;
- developing templates for a range of standard workplace documents and emails;
- providing handouts prior to any training sessions or meetings, to allow the apprentice to process new information in their own time;
- encouraging the apprentice to develop their own coping strategies and setting up appropriate systems to help them keep track of their work; and
- encouraging the apprentice to develop a 'script' to explain their dyslexia to others.

The types of support that will be useful for someone with dyslexia will vary from person to person. It is therefore important for line managers to speak to apprentices about the ways in which their disability affects their experience of work and what support they find most useful and effective.

## Key support organisations

The following organisations can provide helpful information and advice if you are looking to hire an apprentice with dyslexia. They are listed alphabetically.

- [Adult Dyslexia Organisation](#) is a user led organisation providing advice and guidance as well as campaigning on behalf of adult dyslexics.
- [The British Dyslexia Association](#) offers a range of training programmes on dyslexia in the workplace for employers.
- [The Dyslexia Association](#) offers a wide range of support for dyslexic employees, as well as dyslexia awareness training and consultancy services to employers.
- [Dyslexia Action](#) runs dyslexia awareness training for employers, offers workplace consultancy, carries out diagnostic assessments with employees and has some useful resources and contacts on their webpage.
- [The Dyslexia Foundation](#) offers support to employees with dyslexia in the workplace.
- [Skills Rocket](#) is a free e-learning website which offers tutorials, support and help tips for adults with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, AD(H)D or neuro differences.

## Apprentices with mental health problems

It is estimated that one in six adults will have a mental health problem at any one time, and one in five employees will experience mental health difficulties in any year.<sup>12</sup> Of all disabled groups, those with mental health problems are the least likely to be employed, yet around 90 per cent of people with mental health problems actively wish to secure a job.<sup>13</sup> The main barrier to them doing so is the unwarranted stigma attached to mental illness in our society. In fact, people with mental health problems are more at risk from others than they are a risk to other people.

Mental health problems are very common and can affect any of us at any point in our lives. It is therefore helpful to consider mental health and illness as a continuum along which we all move during our lives. It is also important to remember that

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<sup>12</sup> NIACE (2010) *Take Ten People: Integrating Employment and Learning and Skills*.

HM Government (2009) *Work, Recovery and Inclusion*. London. At: [www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/Work\\_Recovery\\_and\\_Inclusion\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/Work_Recovery_and_Inclusion_PDF.pdf)

people with mental health problems can and do recover, but their conditions may fluctuate. Furthermore, some people who develop mental health problems (particularly young people) may not realise that this is what is happening to them. These individuals may need help to access appropriate advice and support.

Due to the commonness of mental health problems, some people may need to work while experiencing symptoms and learn how to manage those symptoms in the workplace. As a result, some people may find it difficult to manage the social world of work. The following examples of support may help employers and apprentices with mental health problems to find ways in which they can manage symptoms in the workplace.

### **Ways employers can support apprentices with mental health problems**

If you recruit an apprentice with mental health problems, or find that one of your existing apprentices develops mental health problems, you will usually find that the support they need is not costly and generally reflects good practice in supporting all apprentices in the workplace.

The support that you can offer to apprentices with mental health problems differs little from normal management processes. It is important that:

- you include a positive statement about employing people with mental health problems as well as disabilities in job advertisements, as many people with mental health problems will not consider or describe themselves as disabled;
- you can give fair and truthful justification to a person with mental health problems or a disability who is turned down for a job;
- [mental health awareness training](#) is included as part of the induction process for all of your staff (this can sometimes be paid for through [Access to Work](#));
- you work with your staff to develop a culture where open and honest communication, support and mutual respect is encouraged between colleagues;
- you encourage an ethos where staff feel comfortable talking about mental wellbeing, reducing the stigma surrounding mental health problems and enabling apprentices to disclose their experiences (if they wish);
- your apprentice is given control over their work, for example by allowing flexible working hours and supporting them to prioritise work and targets; and
- your apprentice has a manageable workload.

Workplace wellbeing initiatives can be the most important and beneficial forms of support to both employees and employers, because they can help people to manage and mitigate the symptoms they are learning to live with. These initiatives aim to provide a holistic approach to improving mental wellbeing in the workplace. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a [case study of a successful workplace wellbeing initiative](#) on their website.

The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) [Line Managers' Resource](#) has further useful information and advice about supporting employees with mental health problems.

The above types of support are very similar to the best practice approaches that will assist all apprentices and staff to excel in the workplace. By developing approaches that can effectively support disabled apprentices, all employees can directly benefit from the improved levels of individual assistance available.

The types of support that will be useful for apprentices with mental health problems will vary from person to person and possibly from day to day. It is therefore important for line managers to speak to apprentices about the types and level of support they find most useful and effective.

### Key support organisations

The following organisations can provide helpful information and advice if you are looking to hire an apprentice with mental health problems. They are listed alphabetically.

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) [Health, Work and Wellbeing initiative](#) webpage provides useful information on the steps government is taking to improve mental wellbeing in the workplace and the support they are offering to employers.
- The [Health and Safety Executive](#) has some useful information and advice for employees and employers about how to manage work-related stress.
- [Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\)](#) is an educational course which teaches people how to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health problem.
- [Mindful Employer](#) provides employers with information and support for staff who have a mental health problem.
- The [Time to Change](#) campaign has lots of resources and hints and tips on ways to support people with mental health problems.



## Apprentices with a physical disability or mobility difficulties

Physical disabilities can take many different forms. They can be temporary or permanent, intermittent, stable or degenerative, and may affect parts of the body or the whole of it.

### Strengths of apprentices with a physical disability or mobility difficulties

People with physical disabilities have the same range of skills and abilities as the population as a whole. Hiring an apprentice with a physical disability or mobility difficulties can result in the purchasing of equipment (such as a ramp or lift), which will make your company more accessible for other people with a physical disability or mobility difficulties. It will also send out a clear message that your organisation is positive, flexible, disability-aware and reflects social diversity.

### Ways employers can support apprentices with a physical disability or mobility difficulties

The support you need to provide to apprentices with physical disabilities or mobility difficulties mostly centres on physical adaptations to the workplace and the purchasing of specialist office furniture. However, there are some other considerations you may wish to make. These include:

- checking the routes from parking spaces to the building are clear and easily manoeuvred by someone with a physical disability;
- providing your apprentice with a desk in an accessible office, for example on the ground floor or with lift access;
- ensuring there is enough space between desks and in corridors for someone with a physical disability to move around with ease;
- ensuring that toilets are accessible; and
- organising orientation sessions for individuals, to assist navigation around buildings.

The types of support that will be useful for apprentices with physical disabilities and mobility difficulties will vary from person to person. It is therefore important for line managers to speak to apprentices about the ways in which their disability affects their experience of work and what support they find most useful and effective.

## Key support organisations

The following organisations can provide helpful information and advice if you are looking to hire an apprentice with a physical disability or mobility difficulties. They are listed alphabetically.

- [Disability Rights UK](#) offers a consultancy service to support employers in hiring and supporting people with physical disabilities.
- [Neurosupport](#) can provide information, advice and guidance on neurological conditions and support employers to make any necessary changes to the workplace.
- [The Business Disability Forum](#) provides factsheets on a range of physical disabilities for their members.

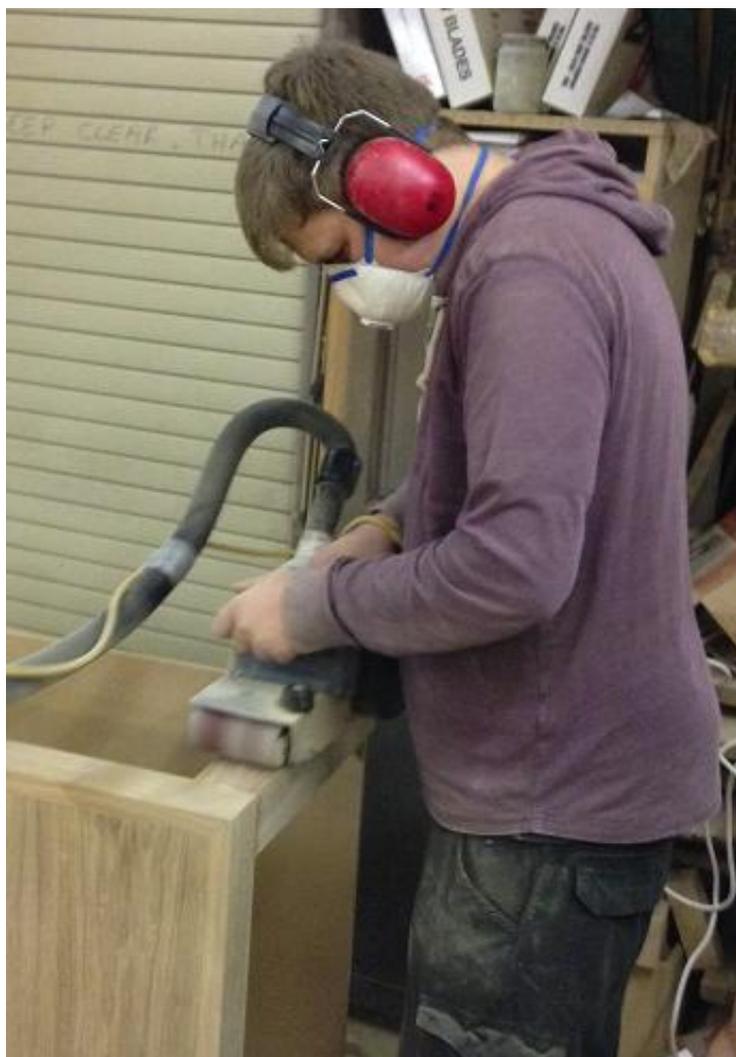
## Case studies

The following case studies are of businesses and/or learning providers which have successfully recruited and supported disabled apprentices. We have included these case studies in the toolkit because they clearly demonstrate that all employers regardless of size, sector and ownership are reaping significant business benefits from actively recruiting and supporting disabled apprentices.

The case studies have been listed in alphabetical order by name of business.

## Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker Ltd

Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker Ltd is a bespoke furniture-making business based in Buckinghamshire. The owner, Alan Cooper, ran the business on his own for many years, but was interested in hiring an apprentice in order to pass on his skills and have an extra pair of hands in the workshop.



© Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker Ltd

### Recruitment

Alan approached a college which was initially enthusiastic about his offer of an Apprenticeship but in the end did not put any names forward for interview. Alan was discussing his frustration about this with a customer who said they knew of a young man who was doing a one-year course in joinery at college and who was looking for

an Apprenticeship placement: “He was looking for just the opportunity that I was looking to offer.”

Alan’s apprentice, Joe, visited him at his workshop for an initial introduction. They discussed Alan’s work and Joe’s experience in the trade. The fact that Joe had completed a one-year bench joinery course at college meant that Alan was confident he could do the work required for the Apprenticeship. Soon after, Joe started with Alan on an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.



© Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker Ltd

### Apprentice support

During his initial assessments, it was found that Joe was dyslexic. However, Alan strongly believes that this has had little impact on the quality of Joe’s work. He feels confident to let Joe get on with the simpler tasks and has been impressed at the

level of accuracy Joe achieves on tasks which his dyslexia might have affected. For example, he only occasionally needs to provide Joe with some additional support with his writing and spelling.

Alan let Joe choose the training provider for his Apprenticeship. He chose Webs Training, a specialist in the furniture industry whose tutors are all ex-apprentices. Joe attends Webs on block release every three months and his tutor visits the workshop once a month to check on Joe's progress. If Joe struggles with something in between these visits he can email or ring his tutor.

*“They give great support on the work that you do ... because they're all ex-students, they understand the work more than someone who's just been told what they have to say.”*

**Joe Calderbank, apprentice**

Joe uses technology to overcome some of the barriers his disability presents around reading and writing. For example, he uses his mobile phone to take notes and emails the information to Alan, which Alan has found more convenient for his filing system. Similarly, Webs have provided Joe with a memory stick onto which they have uploaded all of his assignments. This means that he can do all of his coursework on a computer.

### **Benefits to the employer**

In Buckinghamshire, employers who take on an apprentice are eligible for the Bucks Grant, a one-off payment of £1500 from the Buckinghamshire Apprentice Grant Team. Employers who take on an apprentice with additional needs receive a further £1000 grant. Connexions Buckinghamshire approached Alan and informed him that he was not only eligible for the Bucks Grant, but also for an extra grant because of Joe's dyslexia. This enabled Alan to make adjustments to his workshop to accommodate a second member of staff, and also covers the additional time he spends supporting Joe with paperwork and writing.

*“It's a cushion for those times where I have to take a little bit more time explaining things to him or reading his writing! It takes the pressure off.”*

**Alan Cooper, employer**

The apprentice salary has been a good step for Alan to expand his small business as it means he doesn't have to find a large wage each month. It also means that Alan is happy for Joe to watch him do some of the more difficult tasks without worrying that he's costing him a lot of money. In addition, Alan has found that with Joe's help he is getting more work done, which covers the overheads of having an apprentice.

*“An apprentice is a much easier, gentle step to take and it's what my business needed at the time.”*

**Alan Cooper, employer**

Having a dyslexic apprentice has also changed Alan's views on what to look for in an employee. He used to judge a lot of job applications by the quality of their spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, Joe's abilities and enthusiasm for the work have made Alan realise that writing is not the most important skill a furniture maker requires and that, by dismissing these applications, he could be missing out on excellent applicants. This is something he will bear in mind when recruiting in the future.

### **Benefits to the apprentice**

Joe has already gained a lot of skills and really enjoys his placement. He feels that he has really benefited from doing an Apprenticeship in such a small business as he gets to use all of the machines and is also involved in the design processes, contacting customers, pricing and so on. The practical nature of the work suits Joe as he can make the most of the artistic, 3D skills that his dyslexia lends him.

*“Eventually I'd like to run my own company and hire some apprentices and give them the opportunity to get into the industry.”*

**Joe Calderbank, apprentice**

Alan and Joe are looking forward to the second year of Joe's Apprenticeship when Joe can take on more responsibilities around the workshop. In the long term, Alan is hoping that Joe will stay with him and together they can hire more apprentices to expand the business. Joe would like to support someone to run their own business or even run his own furniture-making business in the future.

*“What I'm hoping long term is that Joe will stay with me and that together we might take on some more apprentices.”*

**Alan Cooper, employer**

### **Further information**

**Alan Cooper Cabinetmaker Ltd** is a bespoke furniture-making business based in Buckinghamshire. For more information, visit [www.alancoopercabinetmaker.co.uk](http://www.alancoopercabinetmaker.co.uk)

**Webs Training Ltd** is a national provider of quality apprentice and adult training for the furniture and associated industries. For more information, visit [www.webstraining.com](http://www.webstraining.com)

**Connexions Buckinghamshire** provides information; advice and guidance on a range of topics to young people aged 16–24. For more information, visit [www.connexionsbucks.org.uk](http://www.connexionsbucks.org.uk)

## Barclays Bank PLC

Barclays is a major global financial services provider engaged in personal banking, credit cards, corporate and investment banking and wealth and investment management. With over 300 years of history and expertise in banking, Barclays operates in over 50 countries and employs 140,000 people.

Barclays is committed to being an accessible and inclusive organisation, and this extends to all of its customers, employees and apprentices. Six per cent of the company's current apprentices have a declared disability and Barclays prides itself on the support it provides at all stages of its Apprenticeship Programme and beyond.

Barclays is at the forefront of the latest development in Apprenticeship policy and plays an active role in the [Government's Trailblazer initiative](#).

### Recruitment of apprentices

From the outset of its Apprenticeship Programme, Barclays ensures that it selects a wealth of new talent, who will become excellent employees and make a significant contribution to the successful future operation of the bank.

Barclays has a dedicated Early Careers Team which manages its in-house Apprenticeship provision. The team is developing an embedded approach for the engagement and support of apprentices in order for Barclays to invest effectively in its future talent. This approach includes working with colleagues from a number of organisations to develop new recruitment pathways into their business. For example, Barclays are working with a provider based in the north of England which is helping to source young people for Barclays' Apprenticeship Programme. These external organisations are effective in attracting non-traditional applicants (for example, disabled people, apprentices from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds and black and minority ethnic apprentices) to the Apprenticeship Programme.

In addition, the Early Careers Team runs a series of external events to promote Apprenticeship opportunities at Barclays, providing an opportunity for existing apprentices to act as ambassadors, by visiting schools and colleges and promoting their learner journeys to students.

*“We craft the message so that young people understand that there is nothing detrimental in declaring a disability, it’s not a negative thing.”*

**Shaun Meekins, Head of Employability Engagement**

Once they have been recruited to the Apprenticeship Programme, prospective apprentices participate in a five-week, classroom-based induction programme. They then undertake two weeks’ work experience in a relevant department in Barclays, which acts as an active working interview. This is followed by a formal interview process which takes account of candidates’ performance during the five-week induction and their two-week work experience placement, as well as giving candidates the opportunity to discuss their previous experience and motivations for working at Barclays.

Upon completion, successful candidates progress to the Apprenticeship Programme to pursue opportunities in a relevant department at Barclays. Unsuccessful candidates are supported to access appropriate careers information, advice and guidance, and are signposted to alternative employment and training opportunities. Both successful and the unsuccessful candidates receive a full feedback report on their performance at every stage of the recruitment process.

This extensive recruitment and selection process enables Barclays to hire more non-traditional apprentices, as the applicants are not judged simply on their previous experience or formal qualifications alone; their potential skills and capabilities can be accurately assessed through the recruitment process.

### **Support for disabled apprentices**

All apprentices have a line manager who provides them with day-to-day support. The line manager can refer back to the Early Careers Team if there are any issues or difficulties with the apprentice’s performance. The Early Careers Team will provide the apprentice and their line manager with additional pastoral support if required.

Barclays is happy to make adjustments for disabled apprentices, and these are tailored to each apprentice’s needs and what works for them. The Early Careers Team tends to find that disabled apprentices are keen to get on with their work and do not want to emphasise any difference between themselves and their colleagues.

*“Even when we talk to apprentices who have declared their disability, they are very keen that it isn’t a subject that is repeatedly referred to or mentioned. Because, ultimately, they just want to come in and they want to do their job. They are hugely appreciative of the reasonable adjustments that we make for them, but actually, beyond that and when we’ve done that, they’re really, really keen to knuckle down.”*

**Tracy Longhurst, Operational Specialist, Early Careers**

Barclays does not view Apprenticeships as short-term positions, but as an opportunity to mobilise and retain new talent for the business. Consequently, Barclays is committed to investing in its apprentices’ future and its Apprenticeship Programme aims to kick-start apprentices’ long-term careers.

### **Benefits for Barclays**

Barclays finds recruiting disabled apprentices has a positive impact on the business. It is actively learning how best to recruit apprentices with disabilities, in particular apprentices who are hard of hearing or partially sighted.

The commercial aspects of the return on investment are already being noted by Barclays. The loyalty of the new disabled apprentices to the bank is outstanding. There are clear improvements in the retention of staff as a result of the new recruitment policies developed to recruit apprentices. This is resulting in reduced job advertisement and recruitment costs for the bank.

Barclays has an ageing workforce and the widening of its Apprenticeship offer is helping the bank strengthen its equality and diversity statistics, making it a more successful and inclusive organisation. Barclays has found that its intake of new apprentices has injected new ideas and dynamism into departments across the bank.

## Future plans

The bank's senior management are extremely supportive of the Early Careers Team's work with external organisations to develop new access pathways for disabled apprentices. By working in partnership with organisations like [Disability Rights UK](#), Barclays is aiming to increase the percentage of disabled apprentices recruited over the next three years from the current six per cent to between ten and 15 per cent. In total, Barclays is planning to recruit a further 1000 apprentices across many areas of the business over the next 12 months, including Human Resources, Head Office and IT.

Barclays is developing a new thrust for its recruitment approach which has been published in a new policy report. This report draws on the socio-economic impact and return on investment of having a diverse workforce, in order to re-affirm the bank's commitment to widening participation in recruitment. The report demonstrates the contribution that the widening participation of employees through the Apprenticeship Programme has made to the operation and profitability of Barclays.

## Further information and contact

Barclays Bank PLC is a major global financial services provider operating in more than 50 countries worldwide. For more information, visit [www.barclays.co.uk](http://www.barclays.co.uk).

## Enable Housing Association

Enable is a Derbyshire-based charity which supports people with learning difficulties. Enable has 650 members of staff and supports up to 350 service users a day. A key part of Enable's work involves supporting people with disabilities. Enable currently employs four disabled apprentices who it recruited through [Vision West Nottinghamshire College](#).

### How it works

Enable has supported apprentices with a range of disabilities, including mental health problems, learning difficulties, Asperger's and those who are blind. It provides disabled apprentices with a flexible induction, which allows them to experience different types of work and meet with different colleagues. Enable provides a wide range of support for disabled apprentices, including allocating them a mentor; providing technological adaptations (such as adaptive cameras to enable blind apprentices to work at a till); and offering formal courses on topics including assertiveness, confidence and presentation skills. Training is also provided to all staff members on working with disabled colleagues.

[Click here to view the employer video](#)

### Benefits for Enable

Enable is concerned about a skills shortage in the sector, especially when recruiting the next generation of care workers. This programme has helped to get young people interested in and skilled for their occupational area. Enable has also developed its working partnership with Vision West Nottinghamshire College, which has helped it link up with local employers. Mentors also feel that they have gained valuable skills and experience.

[Click here to view the mentor video](#)

## Benefits for apprentices

Apprentices with Enable gain the skills and experience they need to either stay on with Enable or find alternative employment after they complete their Apprenticeship. As well as developing their vocational and basic skills, an Apprenticeship with Enable provides disabled apprentices with the opportunity to develop softer skills such as communication, confidence and self-esteem. In particular, apprentices value the opportunity to gain qualifications and work experience in different areas, such as administration, gardening and retail.

[Click here to view the apprentice video](#)

## Critical success factors

- Flexibility in the length of the induction programme enables apprentices to progress at a pace that is suitable for them.
- Offering the opportunity for apprentices to work in different departments, undertake different tasks and work with different colleagues not only gives them a diverse and rich Apprenticeship, but also enables them to find out what they enjoy doing.
- Regular informal and formal sessions between apprentices and their mentors allow apprentices to raise issues in a way that is comfortable for them.

## Further information and contact

**Enable** is a charity providing housing care and support to adults with learning difficulties. For further information please visit [www.enable-group.org.uk](http://www.enable-group.org.uk).

## Leicester City Council

Leicester City Council is the unitary authority for Leicester and employs more than 15,000 staff. The council currently runs an Apprenticeship scheme for craft trades and has a number of 12-month office-based Apprenticeships in business and administration and customer service.

**Do I remind you of anyone?**

I attended a **FREE** taster course in craft trades and enjoyed it so much that I decided to apply for an apprenticeship.

**Rohey Jallow,**  
Apprentice Maintenance Technician

Follow us on Facebook: Search for Women In Construction

www.leicester.gov.uk/womeninconstruction,  
email: craftswomen@leicester.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter: WICSAG

Leicester City Council

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### Recruiting disabled apprentices

The Council provides promotional material in a range of different formats and works closely with partner organisations such as [Remploy](#) to promote and encourage disabled people to apply for Apprenticeships. It also promotes its Apprenticeship opportunities to a wide range of potential applicants through outreach work in local communities.

If an applicant declares a disability, then the Council makes reasonable adjustments at all stages of the recruitment process. This may include having a screen reader, printing information out on different coloured paper, or ensuring that the interview is held at an accessible location, such as a ground floor office with a hearing loop installed. The Council also endeavours to make its interview panels as representative and diverse as possible, in order to avoid unintentional bias in the selection process.



© Leicester City Council

### Support for disabled apprentices

The support provided to disabled apprentices varies according to their individual needs. An apprentice's initial meeting with the Council's pastoral support team involves a discussion about the support they would find most useful in the workplace and classroom. The Council is happy to provide specialist equipment and has done this in the past, for example purchasing adapted tools for an apprentice who was missing half an arm. It can also provide apprentices with one-to-one support from

mentors, appointments with occupational therapists and additional time to complete assignments or assessments.

*“Because there are different levels of disabilities, it’s important to work closely with the disabled apprentice to identify what they reasonably need.”*

**Entry to Employment Co-ordinator**

The Council has found that some employees who are not disabled can make assumptions about the capabilities of disabled apprentices. The Apprenticeship Development Officer therefore works closely with staff to challenge any assumptions about the type of work a disabled apprentice can be offered.

*“Some of the guys were asking ‘how can he do a Gas Apprenticeship?’ I said, ‘I’m here to measure his ability, not his disability’.”*

**Apprenticeship Development Officer**

### **Benefits for Leicester City Council**

The Council has found that hiring apprentices helps to bring new ideas and ways of working into different teams. The commitment and achievements of disabled apprentices can also change preconceptions other employees have about disabled employees’ abilities.

Having an inclusive approach to Apprenticeships enables the Council to recruit the best talent for its business. The Council now has some very skilled and capable disabled employees, including gas technicians, housing maintenance officers and members of their customer service team, who progressed from their Apprenticeships but may not otherwise have had the chance to secure employment with the Council.

*“It’s definitely helped us to capture and maintain the best talent for our business.”*

**Entry to Employment Co-ordinator**

Overall, the Council feels it makes good business sense to invest in support for disabled apprentices if they are the right candidate for the position.

*“It makes business sense to support an apprentice and make sure they don’t drop out; especially after investing money into their development.”*

**Apprenticeship Development Officer**

### **Benefits for apprentices**

The support the Council puts in place means it has very high success rates for its disabled apprentices. As well as developing valuable skills, disabled apprentices feel proud of their achievements with the Council and can also have wider benefits for families.

*“I’ve got three kids and my oldest daughter looks up to me. She says to me, ‘I’m so proud of you mum because I know you struggle with reading and writing and stuff and look where you are!’”*

**Apprentice**

The Council has found that about half of its disabled apprentices find employment at the end of their Apprenticeship, either with the Council or with an alternative employer. The other half tend to go back into education, either to study for A-levels or a degree at university.

*“This has given me a great opportunity to think I can actually do something. I think Leicester City Council recognise your strength as well as your weakness... I think a lot of companies should do that: judge the person on their abilities, not just what they struggle on. They could get a good benefit out of them.”*

**Apprentice**

### Critical success factors

- Working with partner organisations and doing outreach work in communities to promote Apprenticeship opportunities ensures that the Council engages a wide range of applicants.
- Providing individualised support for apprentices ensures that they receive the type and level of support which enables them to succeed.
- To ensure that disabled apprentices' opportunities are not limited in the workplace, the Council challenges other employees' assumptions about their abilities.

### Further information

**Leicester City Council** is the unitary authority serving the people, communities and businesses of Leicester. For more information, please visit the [Leicester City Council website](#).

## Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust

The Apprentice Steps programme offers a blended college and work placement course of learning for young adults with learning difficulties. The pre-Apprenticeship programme was developed in partnership by Luton Adult Learning, Luton Borough Council's New Horizons service, and Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust in response to the lack of Apprenticeships which were accessible to people with learning difficulties. Two of the original cohort of ten Apprentice Steps learners have successfully progressed to an Intermediate Apprenticeship with Luton and Dunstable University NHS Trust.

### How it works

The course starts with an intensive, 12-week induction programme which allows for thorough profiling of learner skills and capabilities. Learners are then matched to vacancies offered by Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust in areas such as Human Resources, the library, staff restaurant and fracture clinic.

[Click here for the provider video](#)

### Benefits for Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust and their mentors

Luton and Dunstable Hospital Trust has experienced a range of positive outcomes as a result of participating in the Apprentice Steps programme, including improved efficiency, a more inclusive workforce and gaining loyal, hardworking members of staff who make valuable contributions to the business.

[Click here for the employer video](#)

Learners, mentors, teams and departments have learned that disabled apprentices make valuable contributions to their organisation and have overcome their misconceptions about the abilities of disabled colleagues.

[Click here for the mentor video](#)

## Benefits for learners and their families

Learners experienced a wide range of benefits from being involved in Apprentice Steps, including huge improvements in their confidence, independence, employability and communication skills.

[Click here for the apprentice video](#)

## Critical success factors

- A 12-week college-based induction programme enables learners to get used to a routine and learn about expectations in the workplace.
- A comprehensive induction programme means learners can be matched to appropriate vacancies according to their skills and competencies.
- Allocating a mentor to learners from within their team means learners can be confident to raise any issues or concerns.

## Further information and contact

**Luton Adult Learning** specialises in delivering courses, qualifications, learning opportunities and services designed to meet the needs of both individuals and employers. For further information, please visit [www.lutonacl.ac.uk](http://www.lutonacl.ac.uk) or email [info@lutonacl.ac.uk](mailto:info@lutonacl.ac.uk)

**Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Trust** is an award-winning trust which provides high-quality employment and training opportunities to the local community. For further information, please visit [www.ldh.nhs.uk](http://www.ldh.nhs.uk)

**New Horizons** offers employment support to individuals with a learning difficulty or disability, enabling them to progress and maximise their independence. For further information, please contact Chris Bandom, New Horizons Team Leader, 01582 548371, [christopher.brandom@luton.gov.uk](mailto:christopher.brandom@luton.gov.uk).

## tpm and the Dyslexia Foundation

Over the last decade, Training Plus Merseyside (tpm) and the Dyslexia Foundation have developed a strong working relationship which allows them to provide a comprehensive package of support to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. tpm has developed a culture of supporting and enabling apprentices to reach their potential, so that the identification, diagnosis and support of disability and learning needs are central to its provision.

### How it works

tpm screens apprentices for additional needs using 'Dyslexiacheck', an online tool developed by the Dyslexia Foundation. If the screening is positive, the Foundation runs a full psychometric assessment with the apprentice and provides tpm with a report detailing the diagnosis, the support the apprentice needs and how this relates to their occupational area.

tpm then provides a range of support both to the apprentice and their employer, including: developing a learning plan in consultation with the apprentice; emphasising the importance of using coloured paper and overlays; peer support from apprentices at the Dyslexia Foundation; use of assistive technology such as iPads, smartphone apps, voice recorders, dictation and speech to text; the use of an e-portfolio; extra time in examinations; and scribes and readers.

[Click here for the provider video](#)

### Benefits for employers

Employers who work with tpm have found that hiring an apprentice with dyslexia or another learning disability or difficulty has not been a barrier to them achieving or making a significant contribution to the organisation. The support from tpm and the Dyslexia Foundation has made the prospect of hiring and supporting a disabled apprentice less daunting for employers.

[Click here for the employer video](#)

## Benefits for apprentices

tpm can demonstrate that their apprentices with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties achieve to the same level as apprentices who are not disabled. The majority of apprentices supported by tpm are kept on as permanent members of staff by their employers, and some are now employers in their own right. These young people are starting to hire their own apprentices and use tpm to deliver the learning.

[Click here for the apprentice video](#)

## Critical success factors

- Senior management's commitment to equality and diversity enables tpm to provide effective support to disabled learners and improve their success rates.
- The right approach to supporting apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to succeed at the same level as other apprentices.
- tpm's comprehensive provision means that employers can hire disabled apprentices without worrying about any additional cost or support they may require.

## Further information and contact

**The Dyslexia Foundation** is a national organisation offering specialist one-to-one study skills support to learners with learning difficulties including dyslexia and dyspraxia. For more information, visit [www.dyslexia-help.org](http://www.dyslexia-help.org)

**Training Plus Merseyside (tpm)** is a specialist vocational training company based in Liverpool. They offer Traineeships, Apprenticeships and a range of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses. For more information, visit [www.tpmnow.co.uk](http://www.tpmnow.co.uk)

## Support and useful resources

There are lots of ways for employers and the disabled apprentices they employ to get very practical help quickly, easily and often for free. The available support covers every stage of the recruitment and subsequent processes.



### Financial support for employers

There are a number of funds or programmes in place to help employers with some of the costs of hiring disabled employees or apprentices. They include:

#### **Access to Work**

This programme can help with some of the costs where an individual requires support or adaptations beyond the reasonable adjustments that employers are legally obliged to provide. A grant from Access to Work can be used to provide a range of support or make adaptations, including:

- special aids and equipment
- adaptations to equipment
- travel to and/or in work
- communication support at interview
- a wide variety of support workers
- the Mental Health Support Service

Potential apprentices can get an indicative decision from Access to Work prior to being offered an Apprenticeship with an employer. In some instances, the Access to Work Grant can cover 100 per cent of the costs of any adaptations. The employers involved in developing this toolkit found that the costs of making adaptations to accommodate a disabled apprentice or employee are typically lower than £100.

Employers can get an indicative decision on whether an Access to Work application would be successful, and how long this process would take, before interviewing for an Apprenticeship position.

Find out more in GOV.UK's [Employer's guide to Access to Work](#).

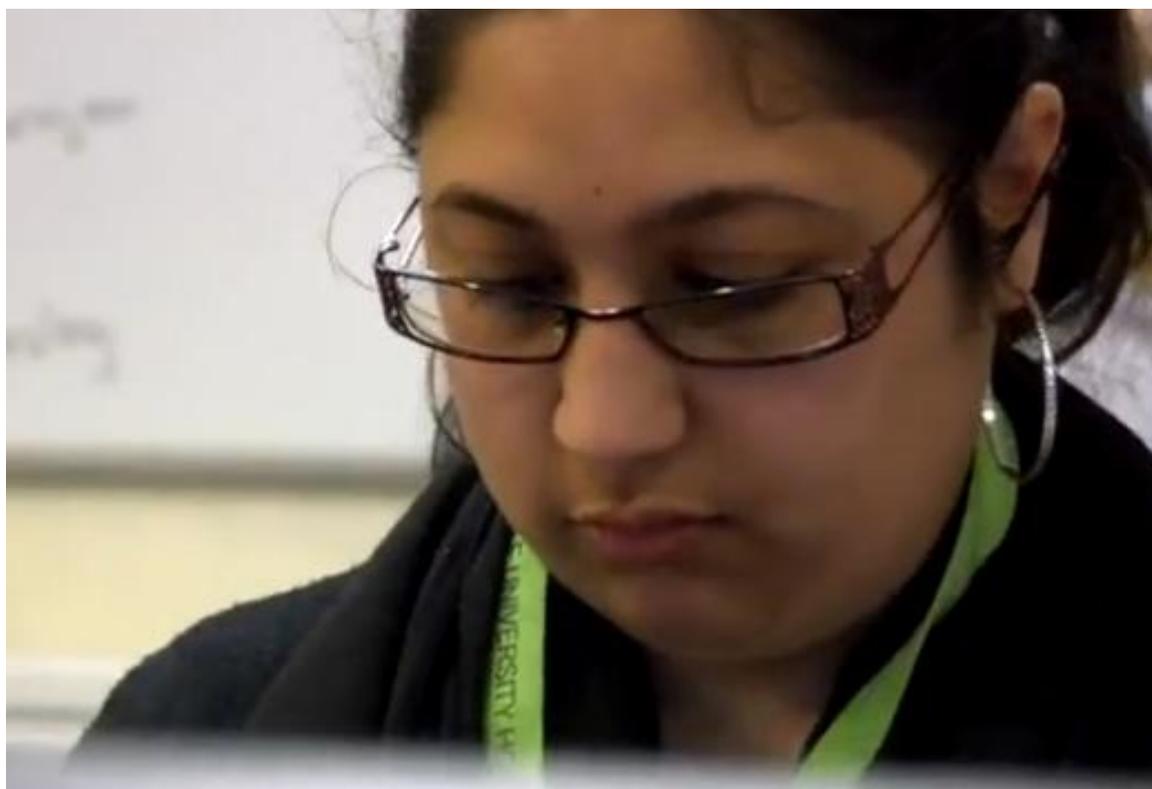
### **Wage incentives for young disabled employees**

A wage incentive can be claimed if a job lasting 26 weeks is offered to an 18 to 24 year old who's participating in Work Choice. There are two rates to the wage incentive:

- £1137.50 for work between 16 and 29 hours a week
- £2275 for full-time work of 30 hours or more a week

Find out more on GOV.UK's webpage about [wage incentives](#).

## Recruiting disabled apprentices



The following organisations offer support to employers looking to recruit disabled apprentices.

**The Business Disability Forum (BDF)** offers some excellent information and advice about building the corporate business case for employing people with a disability and offers a step-by-step guide to engaging with disability as a business priority.

Web: [businessdisabilityforum.org.uk](http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk)

Tel: 0207 403 3020

**EmployAbility** provides services to employers to help them recruit and retain disabled candidates.

Web: [www.employ-ability.org.uk](http://www.employ-ability.org.uk)

Tel: 07852 764 684

Email: [info@employ-ability.org.uk](mailto:info@employ-ability.org.uk)

**Remploy Employment Services** provides wide-ranging support to help employers to recruit and retain talented and motivated disabled people.

Web: [www.remploy.co.uk/employers.ashx](http://www.remploy.co.uk/employers.ashx)

Tel: 0845 600 2517

**Shaw Trust** provides recruitment and training services to businesses to enable them to recruit disabled candidates and make reasonable adjustments.

Web: [www.shaw-trust.org.uk/businesses](http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/businesses)

Tel: 01225 716300

**Vision Apprentices** advertises and conducts pre-selection processes on behalf of employers. They have supported [Enable](#) to recruit and retain their disabled apprentices.

Web: [www.visionapprentices.co.uk](http://www.visionapprentices.co.uk)

Tel: 0800 121 8317

Email: [info@visionapprentices.co.uk](mailto:info@visionapprentices.co.uk)

## Support for disabled apprentices in work



Once an employer has hired a disabled apprentice, they can access a range of programmes and services which can help them to provide any additional support their apprentice may need.

### Local learning providers

The learning provider which provides the training element of the Apprenticeship will carry out your apprentice's initial assessment. Every apprentice has an initial assessment as part of their interview to ascertain their learning level. An apprentice with a disability or social need will undertake a specialist assessment to identify any barriers or support requirements that may not be apparent during a standard interview.

Once the assessment has been carried out, the learning provider will develop a support package in consultation with you and your apprentice. This will include:

- what support will be provided, when and by whom;
- the time period the support package will cover;
- identification of support which is provided over and above what is usually provided to an apprentice; and
- a review every 12 weeks to ensure that the support is still relevant and appropriate.

This support will be paid for by the provider through their funding from the Skills Funding Agency.

### Employment support agencies

Employment support agencies work closely with employers to find appropriate placements for disabled candidates. They can offer a range of support, including vacancy matching, briefings for staff and one-to-one support for disabled apprentices.

For more information, visit the [British Association for Supported Employment's website](#).



## Work Choice

The Work Choice programme can offer tailored support packages to a business if it employs a disabled person who needs specialist support. The support packages aim to develop the skills and abilities of the disabled employee. A local provider can help you to recruit and retain disabled people through the Work Choice and Access to Work programmes.

Find out more on GOV.UK's webpage about [Work Choice](#).

## Supported internships

The supported internships programme helps young people aged 16 to 24 with complex learning difficulties or disabilities to find work. Further education colleges work with employers to find a work placement and develop a study programme which suits the interns' abilities. The intern is based primarily with the employer and both are supported by an expert job coach.

For more information, visit the [Preparing for Adulthood \(PfA\) website](#).

## Traineeships

The Traineeship programme supports young people who want to work, but who need extra support to gain an Apprenticeship or job. Traineeships can be up to six months in length and give young people the opportunity to develop the skills and workplace experience that employers require. The programme is open to young people aged 16 to 24, and those with learning difficulty assessments up to the end of the academic year in which they turn 25.

For more information, visit the [National Apprenticeship Service \(NAS\) website](#).

## Other useful resources and links



### **The Disability Confident campaign**

The government's [Disability Confident](#) campaign is working with employers to remove barriers, increase understanding and ensure that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations in work.

### **GOV.UK**

The [GOV.UK](#) website has some very useful information on the support employers can access when hiring and supporting a disabled apprentice.

### **Making reasonable adjustments for disabled people**

The [Equalities and Human Rights Commission](#) has a very useful and comprehensive webpage explaining the duty of employers to make adjustments for disabled people.

### **Disability Rights UK consultancy services**

[Disability Rights UK](#) offers a consultancy service to support employers in improving their disability knowledge and confidence. This may include disability awareness training, running user-testing groups and advising on HR policies and practices.

### **Setting up a disabled employee network**

Setting up or getting involved with disabled employee networks can help you to become more confident in recruiting and employing disabled people. Kate Nash Associates have published a toolkit about setting up a [disabled employee network](#).

### **Making your website accessible**

Making your website accessible for disabled people will benefit your employees and your customers. EHRC, AbilityNet and BCS have developed [Digital Accessibility: Web Essentials](#). This 90-minute course only costs £30 and aims to equip individuals and businesses with the tools to make their website accessible to the widest possible audience.

### **Installing and using assistive technology**

[AbilityNet](#) provides a range of specialist services on accessibility and assistive technology for businesses and others.

Published by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education  
(England and Wales)

21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester LE1 7GE

Company registration no. 2603322  
Charity registration no. 1002775

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