

Improving access to apprenticeships for people with a learning difficulty and / or a disability

Apprenticeships are a great way for everyone, regardless of their background or circumstance, to achieve their own ambitions and progress into a long term job or career with the skills that employers need. More people with a disability than ever before are doing apprenticeships.

In 2015/16, 50,640 of those starting an apprenticeship declared a learning difficulty or disability. This is 9.9% of the total apprenticeship starts, and an increase of 14.8% on 2014/15. We want to improve apprenticeship opportunities for people with a disability even further, and have set a public measure of success to increase the proportion of apprenticeship starts by people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by 20% to 11.9% by 2020.

We are making good progress implementing the recommendations made by [Paul Maynard's 2016 taskforce](#) to increase starts for apprentices with a learning disability. This includes:

- implementing changes so that from this autumn, apprentices who have, or previously had, an Education Health and Care plan, a statement of Special Educational Needs or a Learning Difficulty Assessment can apply for an adjustment to English and maths requirements to Entry Level 3 Functional Skills. British Sign Language (BSL) can now be used as an alternative to English Functional Skills for those who have BSL as their first language;
- commencing research on how the new funding system is working, to encourage the successful take up and to support achievement of apprentices with a learning difficulty or a disability;
- embedding apprenticeships into the wider Civil Service diversity and inclusion strategy which aims to make the Civil Service the most inclusive employer in the UK;
- developing new communications and guidance products which include case studies of successful apprentices with a disability, an employer toolkit and updated online equality and diversity training for employers;
- integrating the Department for Work and Pension's Disability Confident campaign into the apprenticeship recruitment service so that the Disability Confident logo is displayed on apprenticeship vacancies for campaign-registered employers;
- signing up 'pacesetters' in Kent, Newcastle, Shropshire and Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Islington, West London Alliance and with the NHS to trial and demonstrate what works in making apprenticeships more accessible for people with a disability; and
- setting up an Apprenticeships Diversity Champions Network to engage and inspire employers and communities to ensure that people from all backgrounds are benefitting from apprenticeships.

This work builds on the measures already in place:

- there is £1,000 available to both the employer and training provider to support apprentices aged 19 to 24 who have an Education, Health and Care plan;

- employers with fewer than 50 employees receive the full cost of training for 19 to 24-year-old apprentices with an Education, Health and Care plan;
- providers can claim learning support of up to £150 per month (up to £1,800 per year) to support reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act for an apprentice's additional costs, and excess learning support up to £19,000. In cases that require exceptional learning support of over £19,000 this can be claimed through the earnings adjustment statement (EAS);
- apprentices and their employers can apply for DWP Access to Work funding to support the apprentice's employment; and
- reasonable adjustments can be applied to delivery of apprenticeship frameworks and standards, for example extra time in assessments, assistive technology and / or use of a scribe.

What next?

We are continuing to grow the overall number and availability of apprenticeships and apprenticeship standards and to implement the Maynard Taskforce recommendations.

Our next steps include:

- once complete, considering the research findings on how the new funding system is working for apprentices with a learning difficulty or a disability;
- considering whether there is additional guidance we could provide to support apprentices with disabilities;
- exploring ways to improve the join up of post-16 pathways to employment for young people with a learning difficulty or disability; and
- supporting employers to increase the number of apprenticeships accessible to people with a disability.