

Workplace Adjustments Guidance

February 2023

[Access the Workplace Adjustments Sharepoint Hub](#)

Introduction

This document is intended to help line managers to support employees who need a workplace adjustment.

Employees may also use this document to find out more about workplace adjustments. The identifying and/or investigating of suitable workplace adjustments are the joint responsibility of the member of staff and their line manager.

Managing the procurement, where applicable is the responsibility of the Strategic Resourcing team via a ServiceDesk request, and, as a line manager, you have a responsibility to make sure employees with a disability are treated fairly and have the same opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues.

Employers are obliged to provide “reasonable adjustments” (adjustments) under the Equality Act 2010 to employees with a disability/long-term health condition. However aside from the legal requirement, it is also good practice to consider a workplace adjustment for any employee who experiences a barrier or difficulty at work.

For this reason, we refer to workplace adjustments as the steps taken to remove, to reduce or to prevent the obstacles faced by all employees. In this document we refer to workplace adjustments in the wider sense and we specify where the action is only applicable to employees with a disability/long-term health condition.

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Workplace Adjustments

What is a workplace adjustment?

Employers may need to make adjustments to enable employees with a disability/long-term health condition to do their job. Workplace adjustments are used to remove barriers, or a disadvantage, for people with a disability/long-term health condition but could also help people who don't have a disability/long-term health condition enabling them to develop and fulfil their potential. This could be a change to a working arrangement or providing equipment. Many adjustments don't require a physical change.

Different types of adjustments

Hard Adjustments

These are adjustments to the physical space, or the provision of physical equipment to aid in removing a barrier. They can be divided into three main types:

1. Building adjustments such as ramps, automatic doors, accessible lifts.
2. Furniture such as, height adjustable desks, ergonomic chairs and laptop risers.
3. Equipment such as noise cancelling headphones, ergonomic keyboards and mice, and multiple or different size screens.

Soft Adjustments

These adjustments are non-physical, they are aimed at removing organisational or attitudinal barriers. They may include changes to work start and finish times, adjustments to attendance trigger points, job redesign or changes to the individual's objectives, roles and responsibilities.

IT Software Adjustments

These adjustments are installed on a work device, such as laptop, computer, mobile phone etc. to make the IT infrastructure more accessible to that individual or support them in performing certain tasks. Examples of this would include literacy software, screen reader software and voice recognition software.

Different types of barriers

Physical barriers

This could be steps in a building, adapted furniture or an alarm that is just a sound but does not have a visual way of alerting people.

Attitudinal barriers

This could be viewing people with disabilities as passive, dependent or restricted. An example could be excluding someone from a development opportunity based on an assumption, without checking with them.

You can find examples of types of adjustments in Annex A

What is a disability/long-term health condition?

Disability is legally defined in the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or a mental condition which has a substantial and long-term impact on your ability to do normal day to day activities. Long term is defined as has already lasted, or is likely to last, a year or more. The Act also covers progressive conditions like HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis, even if individuals are currently able to carry out normal day to day activities. People are protected as soon as they are diagnosed with a progressive condition.

It is important to note that not all disabilities/long-term health conditions are visible, and therefore we encourage colleagues to conduct themselves in an inclusive manner that considers the needs of others at all times.

Why do we need to make workplace adjustments?

By law, employers need to make adjustments to ensure employees with a disability/long-term health condition are not disadvantaged. But it isn't always that easy to establish whether an employee has a disability/long-term health condition. It is good practice to consider any request for an adjustment, even if you don't know if they have a disability/long-term health condition. It is also important to have a discussion with your employee if you think they may benefit from an adjustment. To be an inclusive employer, we recognise that failing to make an adjustment can impact engagement, productivity and morale.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against employees with disabilities. Employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments where the employee has a disability/long-term health condition and faces a substantial disadvantage. The Act comprises the three requirements when making adjustments:

- changing the way things are done such as changing a policy on working hours
- making changes to the physical environment, such as changing access to a building
- providing aids and services such as assistive IT software

It is important to remember everyone is different and adjustments need to be considered on an individual, case by case basis

You can find out more about employer's obligations and how to meet them on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#) and on the Remploy website: [A to Z of Disabilities](#).

It is important to note that not all disabilities/long-term health conditions are visible, and therefore we encourage colleagues to conduct themselves in an inclusive manner that considers the needs of others at all times.

Under the Equality Act 2010, what is ‘reasonable’?

Whether an adjustment is ‘reasonable’ depends on the employee and the individual circumstances of each particular case.

When trying to decide if something is reasonable you should consider the following:

- effectiveness of the adjustment in removing the barrier or reducing the disadvantage
- practicalities of making the adjustment i.e., making changes to a listed building
- level of disruption caused
- effect on others
- financial and other costs
- availability of external financial support to help the organisation to make the adjustment
- nature of the job and size and resources of the organisation

ONS should be able to accommodate the vast majority of requests for workplace adjustments. On the rare occasion that a line manager considers a particular adjustment to be unreasonable after a thorough review of the evidence, they should seek advice from their countersigning manager and the Employment Relations team and alternative adjustments should be considered and discussed with the employee if the original request is deemed impractical.

You can find out more about the legal definition of disability/long-term health condition on Gov.uk: [Definition of Disability](#).

You can find out more about the Equality Act 2010 on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website: [Equality Act Guidance](#).

Who pays for workplace adjustments?

Funding of financial adjustments will be paid for from a central budget, except adjustments relating to travel and subsistence which will be covered by the business area using a costing code.

Confidentiality

Any information disclosed by the employee should be treated as sensitive personal information, given to you in confidence and will be covered under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

It may be necessary to share some information with HR or Occupational Health provider; this will need to be explained to the employee.

If you complete a Workplace Adjustment Passport the information contained will be held by the employee, on their Fusion records (if uploaded), and with line managers in accordance with our [Privacy Notice](#).

Eligibility

All employees who need an adjustment should have one wherever possible. Many adjustments are simple, do not have a monetary cost attached and can be implemented quickly.

Line Manager Responsibilities

You make all the difference!

As a line manager, you are key in creating an inclusive culture.

As a manager looking to implement workplace adjustments, you should read this document.

As a line manager, you are expected to:

- treat each employee as an individual: an adjustment which is appropriate for one person may not be appropriate for someone else with the same condition
- treat any request for an adjustment quickly and confidentially
- arrange an early meeting with an employee to discuss their needs, suggest the employee can be accompanied by a union rep, disability network member or colleague if they would like the support
- make and ask for suggestions about adjustment solutions
- consult with HR and experts (as outlined below) where necessary including obtaining medical advice where appropriate
- suggest the employee discusses what might help them in the workplace with their doctor or other health professional
- record adjustment requirements, this could be on a Workplace Adjustment Passport
- record any decisions about why a request has or has not been agreed
- ensure agreed adjustments are implemented quickly
- check that the adjustment meets the employee's needs and removes the barrier
- agree to evaluate effectiveness of adjustments
- review adjustments regularly

At all steps:

- engage with the employee
- take account of their views
- explain that you will be proactive in arranging workplace adjustments

Knowing if a workplace adjustment is needed

There are some situations when you will be able to quickly establish if any adjustments are needed, for example:

- you have a new starter who requires adjustments in place on their first day – there is an option to disclose this information during the onboarding process and the line manager(s) will then be informed
- an employee develops a new condition, or the impact of an existing condition becomes more serious
- a new line manager becomes responsible for an employee who already has adjustments in place

It can sometimes be hard to identify whether someone needs an adjustment, some employees may not tell you because:

- they don't consider themselves disabled
- they don't think they need an adjustment
- they are worried about how it will be perceived or the impact upon their job/career

At your first opportunity, it is recommended that you ask all of your employees through one-to-one discussions if they have any special requirements, require adjustments, and/or have a Workplace Adjustment Passport. A good manager will look for signs that someone is experiencing difficulty with their work, some of the signs could be:

- performance at work has changed
- behaviour or interactions with colleagues has deteriorated
- attendance has deteriorated

Employee Responsibilities

It's okay to be honest.

Workplace Adjustments enable Civil Servants with disabilities and health conditions to achieve their potential by removing barriers and offering support and advice.

People just like you, at all grades, right across the Civil Service have workplace adjustments in place. It is nothing to be worried about. Workplace adjustments change working lives.

Having a workplace adjustment in place will help you to perform at your very best.

Make sure you record your adjustments in your workplace adjustment passport, it will help you if you move roles, departments or have a new line manager.

Review your passport with your line manager, things can change, and an open discussion will help you and your line manager to be clear about what the barriers are that you face and the support you need.

This is a partnership between you and your line manager. It is important that you work together to ensure appropriate adjustments are put in place promptly for you.

If you require a Workplace Adjustment

- be prepared to discuss your requirements with your line manager and engage fully with the process
- record any adjustment requirements on the Workplace Adjustment Passport
- speak to your line manager on a regular basis about any on-going adjustment needs
- inform your line manager if your condition or requirements changes
- if you're applying for a new role or attending a learning course, be prepared to discuss with the relevant PBS colleague about your need for an adjustment

You are encouraged to record all agreed workplace adjustment requirements on a Workplace Adjustment Passport. It will also make conversations about workplace adjustments easier when you change jobs, are assigned a new line manager, or move between business units.

You can find more information and guidance for ONS' Workplace Adjustments Passport, including a template and examples of completed one, [here](#).

Knowing if a workplace adjustment is needed

There are some situations when you will be able to quickly establish if any adjustments are needed, for example:

- you are new starter who requires adjustments in place on their first day – there is an option to disclose this information during the onboarding process and your line manager(s) will then be informed
- you develop a new condition, or the impact of an existing condition becomes more serious

At your first opportunity, it is recommended that you have a one-to-one discussion with your line manager regarding any special requirements or adjustments and/or have a Workplace Adjustment Passport.

Steps to implementing a Workplace Adjustment

To support you in supporting your team member(s), we have broken down the process of implementing a workplace adjustment into six simple steps:

Step 1: Identify the requirements

It is not always easy to identify whether an adjustment is required. As a line manager you already have the skills to hold a conversation with your employee and this may be all that is required at this stage. If you are managing a new entrant to ONS, recruitment will inform you during on boarding and you should contact your new recruit as soon as possible after they have accepted the ONS offer of employment. This should ensure that most, if not all, adjustments are made prior to them taking up post.

- Have a discussion with your employee using the [Workplace Adjustment Passport guidance](#). They may be able to suggest a solution but don't expect them to be an expert. They may still be learning to live with a condition or disability/long-term health condition, or it may not be diagnosed yet. Implementing the right adjustments is a joint responsibility between the manager and the employee.
- Ask if they would like anyone with them e.g., a colleague or union representative but be clear it is an informal discussion.
- Record the key details of your discussion, ensuring you and your employee have a copy.
- Ask them if they would like to discuss it with their doctor or other medical adviser.

There are many different barriers that colleagues might face and many types of adjustments you can make to the workplace to help break these down. It's important to remember that adjustments need to be considered on an individual basis and discussed with your employee. You shouldn't focus on someone's disability/long-term health condition, but rather their ability and how to remove the barrier(s) that stops them from reaching their full potential.

Step 2: Make an initial assessment

Depending on the issues, you may be able to implement some adjustments yourself straightaway. If the request is reasonable, straightforward and no one else needs to be consulted then just do it!

The initial assessment should be conducted as part of a conversation between a line manager and employee as outlined in Step 1. Examples of adjustments that can be made with manager's discretion can be found in Annex C.

We encourage that you do this as part of a private conversation with your team member by working through and completing a Workplace Adjustment Passport.

There are two very important reasons why all discussions and actions should be recorded:

- 1.** to ensure clarity around what has been agreed
- 2.** to formally capture the arrangements in place – this minimises the need to renegotiate workplace adjustments every time they move post or are assigned a new manager within the organisation

Step 3: Consult with experts

For other, more specific requirements, you may need to consult with an expert, this could be:

- ONS Occupational Health provide an initial assessment (referral may follow if needed)
- Employment Relations team
- Business Disability Forum

A list of assessments that can be conducted can be found in [Annex B.](#)

It can take time to arrange an expert assessment if this is needed and so you need to make sure you keep your employee informed.

Managers and employees will be notified of the proposed date by our provider.

Step 4: Decision making

After you have gathered all the information, you should be able to make a decision. For the majority of cases, you will be able to easily decide to implement an adjustment.

When considering implementing an adjustment you need to consider:

- how much it will reduce or remove the difficulty or barrier faced by the employee
- practical issues for example are, 'Is it possible to change lighting for an employee in an open-plan office?'
- how to reorganise hours to help the employee, this is sometimes known as job carving

ONS should be able to accommodate the vast majority of requests for workplace adjustments. On the rare occasion that a line manager considers a particular adjustment to be unreasonable after a thorough review of the evidence, they should seek advice from their countersigning manager and the Employment Relations team. Alternative adjustments should be considered and discussed with the employee if the original request is deemed impractical.

Step 5: Implementation

Once an adjustment has been identified for an employee, it is important that it is implemented in a prompt and effective manner, ensuring that it meets the needs of the individual. It is the line manager's responsibility to implement all agreed and recommended adjustments. This includes:

- Requesting equipment, software, training etc via the [Service Desk](#) form to the Strategic Resourcing Team; and,
- assuring that the adjustment is fit for purpose

The process for implementing adjustments is dependent on the type of adjustment(s) needed and where to go for them can be found in Annex C.

You should aim to have all the adjustments in place within 1 month for existing staff or before a new entrant takes up post.

Step 6: Record on Workplace Adjustments Passport

A Workplace Adjustment Passport is owned by the individual and is used to record adjustments and other important information around barriers.

You should ensure the final outcome for management information purposes is recorded in your Workplace Adjustments Passport and is signed by your manager. It is recommended that the Passport is reviewed at least annually and should be a living document.

You can find more information and guidance for ONS' Workplace Adjustments Passport, including a template [here](#).

Further support

Should you require any further support for Workplace Adjustments, you can find the relevant teams and contacts in the information.

The Strategic Resourcing team

Case manages your request for adjustments by:

- Make the purchase
- Chase and monitor
- Inform the individual of progress and expected delivery

Please note that the Strategic Resourcing Team cannot recommend workplace adjustments. It would be useful to read the [Employee Assistance guidance](#).

Employment Relations team

- Providing confidential support and guidance to staff and managers
- Advising on ONS policies including making workplace adjustments
- Taking a case management approach to supporting long-term absence cases
- Supporting disabled employees and line managers with complicated workplace adjustment cases

For further policy guidance on workplace adjustments please raise a service desk call I want something > Staff Services > HR Policy Not listed > I have a policy question for HR.

Should you need support from a caseworker please raise a service desk call I want something > Staff Services > HR Policy Not listed > I need a caseworker.

Business Interviewer Support Team

- Providing confidential support and guidance to interviewers
- Providing support on the purchases of equipment via Strategic Resourcing team however for any IT queries managers are advised to log a call with Field Technical Support

The Interviewer Support Team can be contacted through the Field Enquiry Line on 0800 144 4094.

Occupational Health

Providing explanations about the impact of a medical condition or medication on a member of staff's ability to do their job

- Recommending treatment (usually for only minor problems)
- Specifying adjustments that will overcome the disadvantage the disabled person is experiencing in the workplace.

- Conducting a detailed workstation assessment to review kit and seating and recommend more appropriate kit
- Provide a more holistic assessment if the initial consultation identifies

Referrals are made by the line manager and advice can be sought from the Employment Relations team. To access Occupational Health, line managers will need to log on via the [Health Partners website](#).

Recruitment

- If you are applying for a role and require adjustments, you should contact the recruiter as soon as possible to discuss your requirements as they may be able to be implemented from the beginning of the process.
- Contacting the successful applicant to confirm what information they wish to pass on to their new manager about their workplace adjustment requirements
- Contacting the manager of the successful candidate to let them know about the workplace adjustments, only disclosing the information that the candidate has given permission to disclose, this may mean not disclosing a person's disability/long-term health condition

IT

- Providing equipment such as a laptop, large screen
- Providing support with procuring more complex requests that have been identified such as acquiring specialist equipment or installing adaptive software
- IT support for home working

Requests for support from IT should be made via a [Service Desk request](#). Interviewers should contact their line manager who will progress on their behalf.

Please be aware that our IT department might not be able to provide expert advice, and so your request might take longer than expected as the appropriate service or guidance is sourced.

All workplace adjustment requests should be identified as Workplace Reasonable Adjustment to ensure speedy resolution.

Business Disability Forum

As a member of the Business Disability Forum (BDF), the ONS has access to a free and confidential Advice Service available to all line managers. This is provided by a team of consultants who are able to provide expert advice on queries relating to workplace adjustments for employees and customers.

- The Advice Service can be accessed via email (advice@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk) or telephone +44-20-7403-3020. It operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

- A number of other useful toolkits and resources are available to all via the [BDF website](#). You will firstly have to register on the [member hub](#) using your ons.gov.uk email address.

Health and Safety

Arranging a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for disabled members of staff who may require assistance in the event of an emergency

Health and Safety practitioners are not disability/long-term health condition specialists or medical advisers and so cannot assess the needs of disabled employees if this falls outside the scope of a standard DSE assessment, which workplace adjustment requests will do.

Mental Health Allies

Your mental wellbeing is really important. We want to help and support you by providing a safe space for you to talk about any issues you are experiencing. Getting help early can help with your recovery.

In 2017, ONS set up a Mental Health Allies (MHAs) support group with trained volunteers, for you to get initial one-to-one confidential support if you need someone to talk to, someone outside your own environment.

You can find this information [here](#).

Respect contacts

The Respect Contacts are a group of trained volunteers who provide initial one-to-one confidential support and advice if you need someone to talk to.

We understand that bullying, harassment and unfair treatment can leave you feeling very low and anxious about coming to work, so if you need someone to talk to please get in touch. It's all about respect.

You can get in touch [here](#).

Menopause Ambassadors

We now have 15 newly trained [Menopause Ambassadors](#) who have carried out training and have access to resources so that they can help you.

Annexes

Annex A – Examples of workplace adjustments

Annex B – Workplace adjustment assessments available

Annex C – Where to go to obtain/implement a workplace adjustment

Annex D – CSWAS Review Route Guidance

Annex E - Useful Internal Links

Annex A – examples of workplace adjustments

Adjustment	Example
Altering working hours	<p>A member of staff is on medication that makes them drowsy in the morning.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their working pattern is changed so that they start work at 10 am and finish at 6 pm • Consider timings of meetings to allow individual to attend 0r provide regular breaks to limit fatigue • Arranging key meetings for later in the morning so not to exacerbate a colleague’s condition.
Modifying instructions or reference manuals	A member of staff with a visual impairment is provided with information in large print, audio, Braille or another appropriate format.
Giving or arranging for additional training or mentoring	A member of staff who has been on long-term sick leave is assigned a mentor to help build their confidence.
Modifying procedures for testing or assessment	Allowing a member of staff with dyslexia to use voice activated software to complete an assessment of their written skills or giving them more time to complete the assessment.
Allocating some duties to another person	Answering the phone; moving presentation boards.

Making adjustments to premises	Office furniture is rearranged to ensure a wheelchair user can move around freely; providing additional heating or cooling appliances. Modifications are made to door handles, taps in the toilets and kitchens, and more doors are set to automatic for those with reduced mobility in their hands.
Acquiring or modifying equipment	Providing specialist software and a second large screen for staff with a visual impairment. Specialist mouse to limit strain on hand
Providing supervision or other support	ONS recruits a member of staff with Asperger's Syndrome. A support worker assists the employee during the induction and provides additional support as necessary; for example, during appraisals, training or learning a new job.
Providing a reader or interpreter	A deaf member of staff who usually lip-reads at work is provided with a sign language interpreter for a promotion interview. This allows them to compete fairly with other candidates.
Agreeing absence during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment	Health checks at doctors or hospital to ensure condition is well managed such as an asthma review or assessment
Agree to different ways of working i.e. location	Arrangements can be made for members of staff to work from home, either permanently or temporarily, if appropriate to the role and in line with the needs of the business.
Adjustment of trigger points	An employee with a disability/long-term health condition or long-term health condition may experience higher than usual levels of absence. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to adjust absence trigger points if an employee reaches a trigger level of days and/or instances as a result of disability/long-term health condition related absence. Line managers need to ensure they understand the reason for the absence to take appropriate action.

Annex B – workplace adjustment assessments available

The assessments listed below are widely available in the Civil Service to remove barriers and to enable employees to do their job effectively.

An occupational health referral can be requested where a recommendation may be made for specialised assessments to support in ascertaining adjustments for the following conditions:

- ADHD
- Autism
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia

The assessment will be performed by a qualified assessor and a detailed report will be produced for the employee and their line manager. The report will provide a list of recommended adjustments which could include equipment, technology, coaching, training and/or specialist support.

The manager, counter-signing manager, or individual will need to log a [Service Desk call](#) for assistance to implement the financial recommendation(s). Please note that the initial conversation with the line manager should have been conducted and a Workplace Adjustment Passport completed before an individual can log a [Service Desk call](#) for assistance to implement the financial recommendation(s).

Any recommendations that do not require a financial input should be implemented by the manager.

Annex C – where to go to obtain/implement a workplace adjustment

Adjustment type	Where to go
Flexible working* Disability special leave* Tailored objectives Access to information Modifying procedures for assessing performance Increased sickness triggers*	Management discretion Is the adjustment reasonable and can it be made by the line manager without further consultation? If Yes - 'Just Do It'
Specific training and or support	<u>Strategic Resourcing via Service Desk</u>
Wrist support	These are examples of adjustments that may be recommended through an occupational health referral due to a disability/long-standing health condition.
Coloured paper	
Specialist chair	
Specialist keyboard	
Specialist mouse	
Specialist laptop	
Specialist monitor	
Mobile phone	
Assistive software	
Specialist heating or lighting	
Mobility scooters/wheelchairs	
Annual service of scooters etc	
Disabled parking space	
Adjustments to fixtures & fittings	

*You can contact Employee Relations for support on these issues.

Annex D – CSWAS Review Route Guidance

Departmental Guidance - line managers and employees

The Civil Service Workplace Adjustments Service (CSWAS) offers a Review Route for employees and line managers who are experiencing difficulties or significant delays in their attempts to implement appropriate adjustments.

This route supplements existing departmental procedures and should be used where internal procedures have been exhausted and expert independent advice is needed to review and assist in progressing an adjustment request.

Before contacting the review route, please ensure you have followed ONS' internal procedure.

Using the Review Route Service

To use the review route, please contact the [CS Workplace Adjustment Service via email](#).

Please include:

- Your contact details, including your work 'gov.uk' email address
- The government department or agency you work for
- Preferred method of contact
- A brief summary of the case (including the difficulties/delays experienced and confirm there is no formal grievance/complaint relating to the case).

A CS Workplace Adjustment HR Consultant will be in contact within 4 working days.

Scope

In review route cases, the CS Workplace Adjustment Service will:

- assign each case to a HR Consultant to investigate further
- contact relevant parties to gain a full understanding of the issues
- facilitate discussions between relevant parties
- work with departments and individuals to identify and consider possible solutions
- remain impartial and offer advice and assistance

In review route cases, the CS Workplace Adjustment Service will not:

- make decisions on behalf of other departments or agencies
- demand departments/agencies follow a particular course of action
- provide legal advice to either department/agency/individuals

Please note: If you are progressing through formal procedures such as a complaint regarding issues related to the case, these procedures should be concluded before the case is appropriate for the Review Route.

Annex E - Useful Internal Links

[ONS Car Parking Policy - ServiceNow Form](#)

[Disability Special Leave \(Page 15\)](#)

[Special Leave Additional Guidance](#)

[Making Learning and Development Accessible](#)

[Accrual of Annual Leave during Sick Absence](#)