

# Disability Packages

Supporting colleagues with physical disabilities in the workplace



This toolkit is part of our Disability Package 2021. The full package comprises 10 in depth documents to support disabled employees across all considerations of the employee experience.

**These are:**

- Colour blindness in the workplace
- Developing Assistance Dog Policies
- Disability Staff Networks
- Inclusive Communications
- Sensory Impairment
- Supporting colleagues who acquire their impairment whilst in your employment
- Supporting colleagues with learning disabilities in the workplace
- Supporting colleagues with long term health conditions in the workplace
- Supporting colleagues with physical disabilities in the workplace
- Understanding non-visible disabilities

This particular package specifically focuses on supporting colleagues with physical disabilities in the workplace. If you want to find out more information, or want to know how to bring this content to life in a meaningful way for your organisation, please speak to your Account Manager or email [members@inclusiveemployers.co.uk](mailto:members@inclusiveemployers.co.uk)

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# 1. What is a Physical Disability?

A physical disability is an umbrella term that accommodates any disability or impairment that has implications on mobility.

Whilst some people with a physical disability may be wheelchair users, it is important to remember that physical disabilities are much broader than just wheelchair users. In fact, fewer than 8% of disabled people are wheelchair users.

An individual with a physical disability may have been born with their disability or impairment (congenital) or acquired their disability or impairment after birth (acquired).

**A physical disability may include:**

- Wheelchair users (manual or electric wheelchairs).

- Amputees (lower limb, upper limb or multiple limbs)
- Individuals who can walk (ambulant) but have difficulties, with distances, steps, fatigue or pace of walking (some people with a mobility related condition may use a wheelchair on occasions whilst still being able to walk)
- A range of other disabilities, impairments or health conditions that may impact on mobility (cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, Spinal Cord Injuries etc)

## 2. Creating a workspace that is accessible for disabled colleagues

An individual with a physical disability may experience difficulties in:

- Accessing workstations, meeting rooms, bathrooms etc
- Fatigue
- Using technology or equipment for example writing, handling files or using certain tools
- Using a standard computer keyboard or mouse
- Holding a telephone handset
- Travelling to and from work during 'peak times'
- Medication side effects

In order to ensure that you provide the most appropriate, accessible and inclusive environment for all disabled colleagues, it is important to engage with individuals to better understand what works and most importantly what doesn't work and where challenges may occur.

Undertaking robust Equality Impact Assessments on buildings, programmes and policies can also ensure that considerations are made at the conception of any developments often reducing the impact, cost or resources required to make changes retrospectively.

In many instances simple adaptations or modifications can provide excellent solutions to ensure that colleagues with a physical disability are empowered to be fully engaged and included within the work environment.

## 3. Reasonable Adjustments

The Equalities Act requires all organisations to make reasonable adjustments to buildings, workspaces and programmes to ensure that disabled people can fully engage with your offer.

By law, an employer must consider making reasonable adjustments when:

- they know, or could be expected to know, an employee or job applicant has a disability
- an employee or job applicant with a disability asks for adjustments
- an employee with a disability is having difficulty with any part of their job
- an employee's absence record, sickness record or delay in returning to work is because of or linked to their disability

## 4. Access to Work Packages

Access to Work is a government grant scheme which supports disabled people in work. Access to Work might pay for:

- a British Sign Language interpreter
- specialist equipment
- extra transport costs, such as a taxi where no public transport is available or appropriate.

Access to Work can also pay for assessments to better understand what an employee may need at work. Individuals can apply for Access to Work up to 6 weeks before they start a new job or after any period of employment.

To be eligible for Access to Work an individual must:

- be over 16
- have a condition or impairment that affects the ability to do the job or travel to work
- be in or about to start paid work (including self-employment)
- live and work in England, Scotland or Wales

Following recent changes it is now the responsibility of an employee to apply for access to work. This can be done by visiting: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply>

In order to apply an individual will need to consider:

- how their condition affects them
- what help or support they currently receive.
- what kind of help or support is required
- the address and postcode of your workplace
- the name of a workplace contact who can authorise your Access to Work payments

## 5. Top Tips

- The disabled person will always be the expert in their condition, ensure that managers are equipped and supported to have open and honest discussions to explore what works and what can be improved, modified or changed.
  - Consider any clothing or uniform requirements and whether they are appropriate for colleagues with a physical disability (i.e. branding on the back of a top may not always be visible if the employee is a wheelchair user).
  - Consider the accessibility of all venues and meeting spaces (particularly external venues) to ensure they are accessible for colleagues with a physical disability. This may include parking spaces, lifts at venues (and checking that they are working), social events and appropriateness for all colleagues.
- Are company vehicles accessible for the needs of all colleagues and can adaptations / accommodations be made if not.
  - Review the office set up, is there enough space to freely move around (particularly relevant for wheelchair users).
  - Undertake Equality Impact Assessments before implementing any changes to policies, practices or programmes.
  - Ensure that evacuation / emergency procedures are inclusive of and for Disabled People.







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