

**Making workplaces autism-friendly**

There are a number of changes that an employer can implement to make a workplace more autism-friendly. A workplace that recognises neurological diversity is a workplace that is better for all workers. It will also benefit workers who may not be aware that they are on the autism spectrum, workers who do not have a formal diagnosis, or workers who do not have the confidence to ask for changes.

Here are some suggestions for possible adjustments to the workplace to make it more autism-friendly:

* clear and logical rules and expectations
* a relaxation space in the workplace: e.g. a quiet room
* reduction in sensory distraction/overload in the workplace: e.g. maximise natural light, enable easy control of light and temperature, reduce strong smells
* information about autism, and about support services, available so that all workers can access it
* training for managers and others about autism, including recognising autistic positives and skills
* all instructions and policies to be written and communicated clearly and accurately
* tools to assist personal work organisation, for example visual timetables, organiser apps
* that only objective criteria are used for assessment/promotion
* that work schedules are adhered to
* inclusion of autism in harassment and bullying policies, to minimise harassment and bullying of autistic workers and so that managers or employees who bully or discriminate against autistic workers are dealt with appropriately.

Reasonable adjustments for individual autistic workers might include:

* paid time off when needed
* fixed hours rather than variable shifts
* reducing specific sensory stimuli in the workplace, e.g. locating that individual’s workstation in a quieter or less bright part of the office
* change of work location, for example to be nearer home, or nearer support facilities, or to a work location which is quieter or less over-stimulating
* extra breaks to enable relaxation
* providing a mentor
* individual support where schedules are unavoidably disrupted and when changes are introduced
* adjustment to the way in which assessments are carried out
* a clear routine and work schedule
* a personal workstation (rather than sharing a workstation or ‘hot-desking’)
* relaxation of triggers for disciplinary action for matters such as sickness absence or mistakes arising from executive function impairment
* additional training time off for treatment/appointments, as part of a policy for disability leave
* re-allocating some work to colleagues, with their agreement.

Access To Work funding may be available for some of these measures. You can see more information about this here: <https://www.gov.uk/access-towork/overview>.