

An Employers Guide to

Autism in the Workplace

As an employer, you may not realise that autistic people can be highly skilled and qualified and may be extremely employable. This guide is to help support employers who are employing or are considering employing someone who has told you they have Autism. Not everyone with Autism will need extra support within the workplace, however those who do may need small changes to be made at little or no implementation cost to help them work effectively, these are known as reasonable adjustments within the Equality Act 2010.

People with Autism often talk about lack of understanding and support from employers as a reason why they may struggle to keep employment. However, with support in overcoming difficulties, understanding, and making some small changes to capitalise on their strengths and talents, they are likely to be a great asset to your organisation. The information provided aims to answer the many questions you may have about Autism:

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects they how perceive the world and interact with others. People with Autism see, hear, and feel the world differently to others. It is a spectrum condition, and whilst autistic people share some difficulties, it affects every individual in different ways so will need differing levels of support.

How will it affect my colleague?

They may present communication difficulties such as seeming anxious, interrupting conversation, not understanding body language or social queues, or not seeming interested in conversation. They may have challenges adapting their existing knowledge and skills and knowledge to new environments or tasks.

How will it affect the rest of the team and organisation?

Working with someone with autism can be an enriching experience, but the right support is important to make this successful. It is important for other colleagues to be autism aware to enable them to understand and provide the relevant support. Having an autistic colleague means you will most likely be working alongside someone who is above average in one or more of the following skills: reliability, being conscientious and persistent, paying close attention to detail, and high levels of accuracy. People with autism are often creative thinkers and excellent problem solvers. They often excel in areas that require technical skills and have brilliant memory.

What can I do to support them?

Employers have a responsibility to protect employees and potential employees from discrimination and harassment, and to make reasonable adjustments to assist them to do their jobs. Offering support will help the person with Autism to perform to their very best and this is positive all round. Examples of support that can be offered:

- Provide clear and concise job adverts by avoiding any unnecessary information or jargon. Include only skills and abilities that are essential for the job and do not include any that are not.
- Provide inclusive job descriptions. Adverts that contain default attributes such as 'excellent communication skills' where they may not be required for the role may put off a suitable candidate who has autism.
- Provide clear guidance for filling out applications forms and the information that is required.
- Understand the interview challenges people with autism could face. Any social, communication or interaction difficulties means a person may not be able to 'sell themselves'. Allow a supporter to accompany them.
- Provide regular support and training, such as supervisions, mentoring and coaching.
- Clarify the expectations of the job, making sure instructions are concise and specific.
- Increase other colleagues' awareness and understanding of autism.

As an employer you have the ability to lead the way in making the world a more autism-friendly place. By making adaptations to practice, thus promoting business growth, helps people with autism lead a more fulfilling life of their choosing.

Further Information:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/employment/employing-autistic-people/employers>

<https://www.employmentautism.org.uk/the-case-for-employing-autistic-people>

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment>