



Making Sense of Reasonable Adjustments⁷

Adjustments in employment are reasonable modifications to the working environment, attitudes, and working practices, that help to facilitate the removal of barriers and make an improvement to facilities for disabled employees. Here are three main areas on which to concentrate:

1. making changes to the **building or premises** where the person works
2. changing the way in which **work is done**
3. providing **equipment** that will help the person do their job

Most adjustments don't cost anything at all – Employer's Forum on Disability, UK. For example, 51% of work place accommodations cost between US\$1-US\$500 – Job Accommodation Network USA

When necessary adjustments have been identified, modifications should be carried out quickly and efficiently. However, please remember the following points:

- Always consult the disabled employee and agree the proposed adjustments.
- Agree a timetable for implementation.
- If the timetable for the adjustments needs to change, remember to keep the disabled person informed.
- This is particularly important where the person is absent from work awaiting the adjustments or in a different workplace.

Practical examples of possible reasonable adjustments

A practical illustration is provided for each reasonable adjustment. This is not an exhaustive list and steps other than those listed here, or a combination of steps, will sometimes be required.

1. Making adjustments to premises

The direction in which a door opens is set for a wheelchair user and furniture in the office in which she works is rearranged to ensure she can move freely.

See the **Sample Facilities Audit**, that is part of this Online Toolkit

2. Modifying procedures for testing or assessment

An applicant with repetitive strain injury applies for a role in which he will be required to produce word-processed reports with speed and accuracy. Candidates are usually required to complete a typing exercise as part of the selection process. However, as a reasonable adjustment, the candidate is allowed to use voice recognition software to demonstrate his word processing skills.

See the **Guidelines for Recruiting People with Disabilities**, Document that is part of this Online Toolkit.

⁷ Employer's Forum on Disability, UK – Briefing Paper: A Practical Guide to Managing Recruitment



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3. Giving or arranging for training or mentoring (whether for the disabled person or for any other person)

An employee with bipolar affective disorder is recruited after a long period of unemployment. He is assigned a mentor or to help build his confidence. He is also encouraged to join the staff disability network to access peer support. Every member of the employees department receives mental health awareness training. This training is organised with the employees concerned and his participation.

4. Acquiring or modifying equipment.

An employee with severe arthritis in the hands is given a portable computer with adaptive software to enable note-taking during training lectures. Modifications are also made to door handles with the office and taps in the kitchen and washroom facilities.

5. Modifying instructions or reference manuals.

Where all employees are provided with an instruction manual for a new piece of equipment, alternative versions or approaches are made available for employees with disabilities. A braille version is produced for visually impaired employee. For an employee with a learning disability, the supervisor provides an easy read version of the manual with pictures and accompanies this guidance with oral instruction.

6. Providing a reader or interpreter.

A deaf employee who is being considered for promotion is to be interviewed by two senior managers. She normally lip-reads at work, but to enable her to compete fairly with other candidates, a sign language interpreter is provided for the interview.

7. Providing supervision or other support.

An organisation recruits an employee with Asperger's Syndrome. A support worker assists the employee during his induction and advises on additional support that may be necessary, e.g., during appraisals.

8. Allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person.

An applicant has a disability which causes vertigo. The job for which he is applying occasionally involves going onto an open roof, but he can otherwise do the job. The employer allocates this minor requirement for the job to another employee.

9. Allowing absence during working hours and rehabilitation, assessment or treatment.

An employee who developed Parkinson's disease requires a course of physiotherapy. Although it is not the employer's standard policy to allow staff to attend appointments during working hours, as a reasonable adjustment, this employee is given time off the treatment.



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10. Altering working hours.

An employee with a mental health problem has an episode of mental illness resulting in absence from work. Upon his recovery, he is allowed a phased return to work with a gradual build-up of hours until he is able to work full-time again. As he takes medication with side-effects, he finds it difficult to be alert first thing in the morning. He is allowed to work flexi-time, starting and finishing later in the day.

11. Assigning the disabled person to a different place of work.

An employee has developed a disability requiring use of a wheelchair. The workstation on the third floor becomes inaccessible, and so she is transferred to a workstation on the ground floor.

12. Transferring the disabled person to fill an existing vacancy

When all possible reasonable adjustments have been considered, if an employee is unable to perform the core duties of their existing role for reasons related to a disability, the disability confident employer will consider redeployment, transferring the disabled person to fill an existing vacancy.

A sales representative developed multiple sclerosis and is unable to continue in the job because she has to give up driving. She is transferred to a vacant marketing post requiring computer skills, for which she is given training, and is given a modified chair and keyboard, which are suitable for her requirements. Redeployment should be proactively pursued by the employer. Remember that the circumstances in which the employee finds themselves disabled may be traumatic, so assistance with researching vacancies should be given.

Government Grant and Funding Information

Depending upon which country you are in, you may be able to apply for funding to help defray the costs of reasonable adjustments from your government or other funding bodies.

In **Singapore**, the Open Door Fund will provide funds to make it easier for your company to hire or employ those with disabilities. The fund will cover up to 90% of the outlay for the following costs

- **Intellectual Property and Rights** (e.g. licensing and royalties for processes etc)
- **Salaries** of company staff engaged in job redesign and consultancy fees paid to third parties for related job redesign
- Actual cost of **leasing** (up to 12 months) or purchase of equipment (specifically for persons with disabilities) and physical/building modifications
- **Other items**, e.g. adjustment programmes to integrate the persons with disabilities into the company

For apprenticeships for people with disabilities, the fund will cover up to 60% of **actual apprenticeship allowance** paid per person with disability per month for a maximum of 6 months, capped at S\$600 per month.



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Further information about the Open Door Fund can be found at http://www.business.gov.sg/EN/Government/GovernmentAssistance/TypeOfAssistance/Grants/Training/gp_snef_odf.htm

In **Hong Kong**, the Labour Department operates a work orientation and placement scheme which will award up to HK\$4,000 per month to organisations employing a person with a disability. More information on the scheme can be found at this link:

<http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/service/wops.htm>