Enable

Guidance for Managers
Supporting disabled staff at Newcastle University
# Table of Contents

1. Your responsibilities as a Manager ........................................................................................................................................... 2  
2. How to identify support for an existing member of staff ........................................................................................................... 3  
3. The University’s Case Conference Approach ........................................................................................................................... 5  
4. Flowchart of the Process “Enabling staff” ..................................................................................................................................... 7  
5. How to identify support for a new member of staff .................................................................................................................................. 8  
6. University Context ............................................................................................................................................................................. 9
1. Your responsibilities as a Manager

As a manager you have an important role in ensuring your disabled staff are enabled to perform their role and make a full contribution to the University. It is important to recognise that a staff member may have a disability and require adjustments, or respond to requests from a disabled staff member for a reasonable adjustment. You must ensure that any reasonable adjustments are in place for a new member of staff with a disability before or as quickly as possible once they start work.

Note: if an employee declares a disability to a line manager, even in confidence then in the eyes of the law the University is deemed to know. If the employee wishes to keep conversations confidential, try to respect this. However, there may be circumstances where you will have a legal obligation to advise your Human Resources Officer even though it may be against the wishes of the employee, for example, where Health and Safety of the employee could be compromised.

Research has found that disabled employees are:

- As productive as their colleagues
- Have less time off sick
- Stay longer in their jobs
- Have fewer work accidents

The Health and Safety Executive

A disabled member of staff’s work environment must be free from any kind of harassment or less favourable treatment. It is your responsibility to be well informed and confident in dealing with disability matters. Disabled staff are entitled to the same staff development, support and guidance in their work and involvement in what goes on in your area of the University, as any member of staff. You are responsible for making sure that this happens.
2. How to identify support for an existing member of staff

We recommend that a member of staff with a disability tells you as their line manager, or their Human Resources Adviser (HRA) for the first discussion. The flowchart summary on page 7 gives an overview of the recommended procedure that should be followed when an existing member of staff decides to inform someone that they have a disability.

**Initial Discussion**

A member of staff informs you that they have a disability. You or the HRM/A arrange a meeting with the member of staff to discuss the support they need. The **case conference approach** must be used, where more than one person is involved in assessing needs or putting reasonable adjustments into place (See page 6 for details of this approach).

**Suggested points to discuss:**

- How the disability affects them in the workplace
- The support available
- Safety requirements for evacuation in an emergency
- Tools needed to perform their duties (e.g. assistive technology)
- Reasonable Adjustments that are required

**Decide what Reasonable Adjustments are required**

**No reasonable adjustments required** - If no reasonable adjustments are needed you only need to contact Human Resources to report that the member of staff has a disability and have their HR record amended.

**Reasonable adjustments can be readily identified** - You should make arrangements for these reasonable adjustments to be put in place.

**Reasonable adjustments cannot be readily identified** - Specialist advice and assessment is required, you should contact Human Resources to arrange a meeting with the member of staff to discuss the next steps.
Once the information from the specialists has been provided a Disability Case Conference meeting can be held to discuss findings and agree action, arranged and chaired by the representative of Human Resources.

**Implement the plan for reasonable adjustments**

It is normally the local management representative who is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the work and for ensuring that the member of staff is kept informed of progress, including the timing of the adjustments/equipment delivery/training etc. In the case of modifications to the building/estate the Estate Support Service responsible for the work will keep the member of staff informed. The Safety Office should be contacted to arrange for a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan if the member of staff would not be able to leave the building in an emergency.

Funding from [Access to Work](https://www.access-towork.org.uk) is available to the University on the basis that no work commences or equipment/resources purchased until they give their approval. Once the work is completed and/or purchases made the University can make the claim for reimbursement to Access to Work.

*It is vital that staff members do not experience any delays due to issues over which budget is to be charged. Delays can be highly disruptive and stressful for the member of staff.*

**Review**

After implementation a regular review should take place to ensure that the member of staff is working safely and effectively within the reasonable adjustments. Review meetings must be held between the member of staff and their local management representative and the Human Resources Manager/Adviser. A Case Conference should be held and a record should be kept of the meeting and any decisions made/action points.
3. The University’s Case Conference Approach

The University has a case conference approach to discuss and make decisions about a range of issues affecting members of staff, one of which is Disability. This can be used at any stage in the procedure depending on who needs to be involved in the discussions.

The approach consists of

- A co-ordinated process for the management of a disabled member of staff’s individual needs.
- Examining the adjustments that may be required to assist members of staff, it is not intended to focus on the person’s disability.
- The member of staff’s agreement and should involve them throughout.
- Identifying areas of support for reasonable adjustments.
- Gathering information on possible solutions and sources.
- Deciding on an action plan.
- Securing funding.
- Implementing the reasonable adjustments.
- Reviewing at regular intervals.

It is the Head of Unit/Service’s responsibility to manage the welfare of the member of staff. The University employs a number of specialist advisers who can assist to ensure an informed decision making process by using the case conference approach. The disabled member of staff and appropriate representatives of support can meet to discuss their needs and agree an action plan. The responsibility for organising and chairing a case conference lies with the Human Resources Manager or HR Adviser.
What if a member of staff is reluctant to get involved in discussion?

A situation may arise where a member of staff shows signs of difficulty in carrying out their work or there are signs of deterioration in their general wellbeing but either does not raise it with you or denies that there is anything wrong when it is raised. It is your responsibility to ensure that they are able to work safely and effectively. There are safety concerns if they are putting themselves or other people in a position of danger. If their capability has become lower than the expected standard you can intervene and raise matters within the capability procedure.

However, every effort must be made to encourage the member of staff to see Occupational Health for an assessment before any action is taken. You can call on the support of your HRM/A, or Occupational Health staff to help you to gain the cooperation of the member of staff and help them to recognise that there are issues to address.
4. Flowchart of the Process “Enabling staff”

Steps in Process

People involved

Sources of support

Access to Work options for support

Jobcentre Plus External Assessment or advice?

NUI - Assistive Technology Advice?

Meeting to decide on areas that need to be explored for reasonable adjustments

Meet to decide on areas that need to be explored for reasonable adjustments

Decide on Reasonable Adjustments

Member of Staff Informs Line Manager

HR Adviser

Meet to decide on areas that need to be explored for reasonable adjustments

Decide on Reasonable Adjustments

Secure Funding

Implement Adjustments

Review

Member of staff

Local Management Representative

Occupational Health referral?

Estates Support Services request?

Local Safety or Estate contacts

University Safety Office PEEP or DSE

Local funding management representative

Co-ordinated by local management representative

Co-ordinated by local management representative

Access to Work - HR Officer

Co-ordinated by local management representative

Co-ordinated by local management representative
5. How to identify support for a new member of staff

Identify Needs
Where a new member of staff has disclosed that they have a disability the relevant paragraph will be included in their offer letter to ask them to contact Human Resources to discuss any reasonable adjustments they might need to start work.

Decide what reasonable adjustments will be required
Once the relevant information has been obtained the Human Resource contact will get in touch with you to discuss needs and the arrangements for implementation. This may involve talking further with a new member of staff to clarify needs.

Where Access to Work (ATW) is to be applied for, the Human Resources contact will advise the new member of staff and support them to contact ATW. This can potentially be done a few weeks in advance of starting, but if it is not possible until their start date, the application to ATW should be arranged as soon they have started. If this is not possible until their start date, the application to ATW should be arranged as soon as possible after that date so that all necessary information can be provided by the employer (costs, descriptions, equipment etc.) and any assessments arranged as soon as possible.

Implement the plan for reasonable adjustments
Where ATW funding is involved no work must commence or purchases made until ATW have given their agreement to the funds. When we are given the go ahead, work must be completed or equipment purchased before the claim for funds to ATW can be submitted. A local management representative will act as coordinator for the implementation plan and keep the member of staff regularly updated about progress.

Review
The same review process will then apply as it does for an existing member of staff, of where regular reviews should take place to ensure that the member of staff is working safely and effectively within the reasonable adjustments. The Case Conference Approach should be used for future meetings.

Note: An application to Access to Work by a new employee must be made within the first six weeks of employment for the university to be able to claim 100% of the costs.
6. University Context

External Influences
The Equality Act 2010 establishes how employers are required to work with disabled staff. It ensures that disabled staff do not experience discrimination, harassment or less favourable treatment. It provides guidance on how employers need to consider reasonable adjustments for disabled staff to enable them to work to their full potential.

Other relevant legislation
The other pieces of legislation that relate to disability under employer’s responsibilities for the physical and mental well-being of its workforce are The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974; The Human Rights Act 1998; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The University’s Single Equality Scheme 2010
University policy is to treat all staff equally irrespective of their disability. In the case of disabled staff this means identifying and implementing any reasonable adjustments that will help the member of staff do their job safely and effectively.

As part of the University, we must all play our part in implementing University policy related to the support provided to disabled staff. The University seeks to create an inclusive working environment which:

- Provides a workplace in which disabled applicants and staff receive fair, relevant and appropriate treatment
- Provides support, development and training which enables disabled staff to fulfil their potential and effectively perform their role within the University
- Provides working conditions where staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits