

A guide on how to recruit and manage individuals on Accessible Supported Apprenticeships in Health and Social Care, including case studies

Introduction

Little Gate are pleased to share this Employer Guide aimed at Employers who aspire to tap into the talent pool of young people with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by offering inclusive and accessible apprenticeships in the Health and Social Care Sector.

Little Gate have been supporting people into sustained employment with LDD and ADD for 10 years and young people into accessible and supported apprenticeships for 5 years.



Accessible Apprenticeships in Health and Social Care



Employment & disability in the UK

As the landscape of recruitment changes and the demand for homegrown talent grows, this is an ideal time for employers to open their doors to a more diverse workforce as only 4.8% of adults in England with a learning disability are in employment.

Employment – adults with a learning disability

Measure 1E

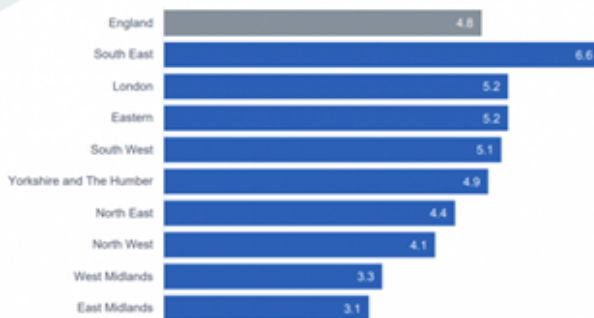


The proportion of adults with a learning disability in paid employment:

4.8%

The proportion of males with a learning disability in paid employment is higher than the proportion of females.

Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment score is highest in the South East region, and the lowest in the East Midlands region.



Males:
5.3%

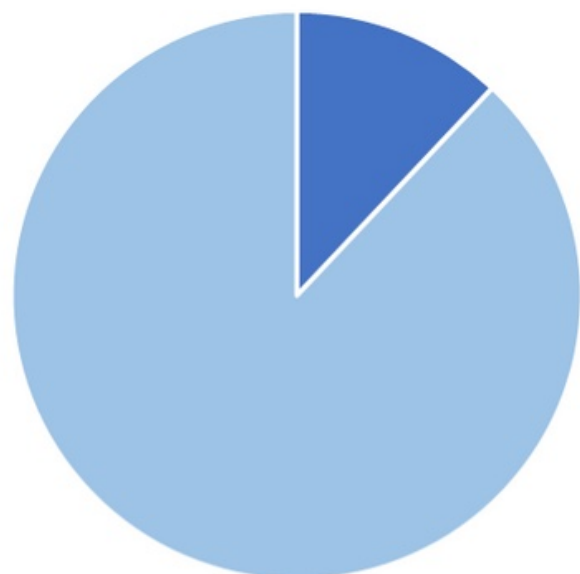


Females:
4.1%

26

Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) 2021 – 2022 figures

According to a report by the DFe in 2019/20, only 12% (39,250) of apprenticeship starts were learners with LDD and/or disabilities in England. From this percentage, the majority identified as having dyslexia or a medical condition. Less than **0.5%** of apprenticeship participants identified as having a learning disability.



■ LDD/Disabilities ■ Non Disabled

What is an accessible supported apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships have the potential to have a life changing impact on any young person and especially those with LDD, ASD and/or disabilities. Empowering learning and training whilst developing practical hands-on paid work experience, all resulting in gaining a recognised qualification that could lead to permanent paid employment and a career of possibilities.

Accessible supported apprenticeships provide young people with:

- Support of a Job Coach at work
- One to one tuition from a training provider
- Additional time to complete an apprenticeship
- 6 hours or 20% of working hours of off the job training
- Reasonable adjustments made at work
- Reasonable adjustments made for assessment

[Watch and listen to Charlene's story, a new Adult Care Level 2 Apprentice](#)



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Why offer accessible supported apprenticeships?

As an Employer, it is your legal duty to follow the Equality Act (2010) and to not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. There are many benefits to you by providing an accessible apprenticeship:

- Increases productivity
- Boosts staff morale
- Increases staff retention
- Reduces absence rates
- Creates a diverse workforce
- Attracts further diverse talent
- Improves inclusivity for all employees

[Watch and listen to an Employer's experience of offering an accessible supported apprenticeship.](#)



3 key questions to ask about your organisation before offering accessible supported apprenticeships:

- 1 *Are your recruitment and assessment processes accessible and inclusive to LDD, ASD and/or disabled applicants?*
- 2 *Have you established, promoted and maintained an inclusive working environment and culture?*
- 3 *How do you support your current staff with reasonable adjustments?*

Stage 1 - Pre Recruitment

Job descriptions

- **Review each job description to only include essential tasks of the role**
 - Consider if the job description only includes the essential tasks for that role or are there additional duties included that could discriminate against LDD and/or disabled applicants)
- **Review the person specification**
 - Communicate that you are open to work experience, unpaid or voluntary work being just as valid as paid work
- **Review the criteria and conditions set to consider if they are creating unnecessary barriers to applicants**
 - Consider introducing part-time or flexible working

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Format and language

From job descriptions to adverts to application forms, adopting an easy read format will help to engage people with LDD and ASD, however also appeal to others too.

Consider:

- Images to illustrate text
- Simple language and words avoiding jargon
- Be transparent and include factual information including work hours, breaks and shift patterns.
- Use of plain font
- Use of large print
- Keeping sentences brief
- Keep documents brief to keep people engaged and to avoid overload
- Printed application forms vs digital



Young people, in particular engage with a variety of interactive material so consider:

- Creating and sharing a video on a video platform in the day in the life of a staff member
- Share your opportunities at peak times which is usually in the evening to reach young people on social media
- Be visible where young people are looking for opportunities, like career fairs at schools and colleges
- Share your organisation values and ethos

To reach further afield share your opportunity on the find an apprenticeship government page:

[Further education and skills: Apprenticeships GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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Kitemarks

Join and share that your organisation is welcoming of disabled and diverse talent on all your job adverts and organisation touch points. Consider:

- Disability Confident is creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people



- The National Centre for Diversity - Equality and Diversity Training

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DI>ERSITY

- Youth Friendly Employer - A quality kitemark for apprenticeship employers supported by key partners (www.youthemployment.org.uk)



Application process

Giving an applicant the opportunity to share in an application form or monitoring form about any requirements they might have for an interview is good practice and essential for anyone with disabilities to help perform at their best.

Consider adding the following wording:

“

Specific requirements

Please inform us about any arrangements or adjustments that you may need us to put in place for you in the selection process, such as for an interview or test. This will help us to help you.

If, instead, you would prefer to discuss this with us, please telephone [insert name of relevant person and contact number] as soon as possible.

”

Source: www.equalityni.org

Once an applicant has contacted you, and shared information follow up as promptly as possible to agree any arrangements to ensure that the applicant feels safe with their sharing, and knowledge that their adjustments will be made.

Stage 2 - Recruitment

Interview process

Take a moment to think back to your interviews....

Do you recall enjoying any or were most daunting and challenging? Anyone with a disability will attend an interview with additional awareness and those with LDD and ADD will potentially find themselves only relying on their memory, without questions that they are able to look at, the expectation of staying still and may find challenging it to talk to people they are not familiar with.



Consider the following :

- Online or in person? Will an online opportunity be more accessible in a number of ways
- If a person, especially a young person has the finances to attend in person regarding transport costs, clothing and shoes
- Sharing the names and jobs titles of the interview panel
- Sharing the exact location of the interview itself, and possibly providing a photograph or video of the space and the environment around it
- Sharing the timings or timetable of the interview and what to expect
- Consider any sensory issues such as light or noise sensitivity that have been shared and adjust lighting, window dressings or seating positions
- Is the space relaxed and inviting?
- Provide a copy of the interview questions
- Allow the option of a notebook of notes they can bring with them as well as to take notes
- Suggest they could think of some questions to ask you and write them down in the notebook
- If the applicant would like someone to attend the interview with them to support them

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The interview

Suggested essentials to provide at the interview:

- Clearly show where the bathroom is
- Offer the option to take a break at any point
- Provide water with extra in a jug beside the glass
- Printed out questions
- Share it's OK for them to refer to their notebook or take notes
- Explain the role clearly
- Provide extra time to answer questions
- Rephrase questions if they are not understood
- Encourage them to ask questions and refer to their questions

Whilst conducting the interview consider your use of language and how you word questions.

Top 3 Tips

1

Use clear and direct questioning avoiding open-ended questions

2

Ask for concrete examples for a person to demonstrate their experience and skills

3

Avoid using sayings and abstract phrases, such as, "Tell us about a time you set a goal for yourself but came up short."

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What else could you consider:

- Provide extra time for any tests
- Provide an opportunity for a work trial or taster session
- A tour around the site before the interview itself to allow an individual time to familiarise themselves with you, the environment and as a warmup to the interview

For information regarding making reasonable adjustments refer to:

[The Discrimination Act 1995](#)

Making an offer

Being in a position to offer a role is a wonderful experience. At this stage, it's important to continue to be as clear as possible if an individual has declared their learning disability or neurodiversity.



Consider the following in addition to the standard points you need to consider when offering the role:

- How will you make the offer? Verbally, in person or in writing?
- From the experience of the interview will the individual require another person present when the offer is made?
- Take time to explain why they have been successful
- Share the process that your organisation will need to follow to recruit them
- Explain how necessary and important it is to carry out references and 'Right to Work' checks
- Share a timeline of the process
- Offer the opportunity to ask any questions or to send you questions
- Follow up the above in writing and if relevant in Easy Read

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Onboarding

Before the first day consider offering a pre-start visit to give the individual an opportunity to familiarise themselves with their workspace and be introduced to some the staff they will be working with.

- Identify their Mentor or Mentors that will be their main point of contact, support and training and introduce them during the pre-start visit
- Show the essentials, like the bathrooms, break rooms, smoking areas and car parks
- If you have the space, consider a quiet space that an individual could access if they required a little time out during their working day
- If any equipment is to be provided, ensure this is ready for the first day

Reasonable adjustments

Allocate some time to discuss what will support the individual to help them do their job and discuss reasonable adjustments and any other factors that may affect their working day.

“Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone’s disability.”
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Reasonable adjustments could include:

- Making a change to the physical environment
- Adjustment to working hours or conditions
- Providing equipment or specific support
- Creating alternative ways to complete a task

ACAS have written an excellent and clear [guide to reasonable adjustments for Employers](#).

Some of the adjustments will not have a cost to them or be inexpensive. Others however will, have a cost and there is help to support with these costs.

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Access to work (ATW)

This is a free government scheme that allocates approximately up to £60,000 per employee to reimburse or contribute to the cost of adaptations, equipment, or services used by the employee to enable them to start or continue work.



Examples could include:

- A job coach in the workplace that supports an individual to learn their role can be funded through ATW.
 - *One of the most important advantages for both an employer and an employee during the recruiting process, and especially at the beginning of employment, is the availability of a job coach. Using a method known as Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI), which breaks down a job into individual tasks and teaches them one at a time while layering on skills and building up their confidence over time, a job coach can be used to help autistic people and people with learning disabilities learn and perform their work duties. In order to provide the individual with coordinated support, the job coach should collaborate with the education team that provides induction and training as well as assist with interpersonal skills necessary in the workplace. This is a key area how Little Gate support apprentices.*
- Assistance with travel to work
- Software to support voice to text
- Training and education of staff on the relevant disability

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Induction

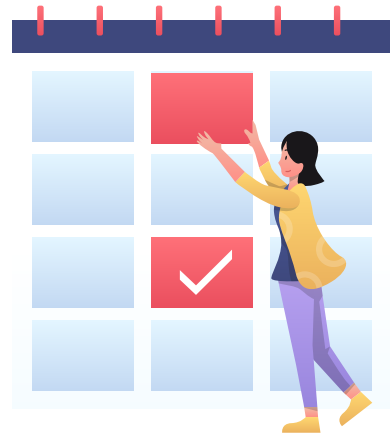
During the induction ensure you allow extra time for forms, tasks and training to be completed as first days are intense and require a lot of time to process.



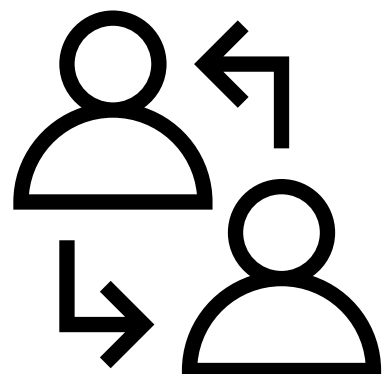
Choose a quiet space with the least number of distractions and allow adequate break times.



Provide a timetable for the first week or two.



Consider breaking up the induction to contrast between interactive and passive moments.



Stage 3 - Retain

Suggested supporting practices in the workplace

Mentors

An essential part of an apprenticeship is the relationship between an apprentice and their mentor. Allocating a mentor or two to cover different working patterns, ensures continuity for the apprentice as well as confidence in you as an employer that all the correct training and passing on of knowledge is taking place.



Work adjustment passport (WAP)

This is a document that records an individual's needs that gives them the best opportunity to work to their potential without discrimination or prejudice. It is voluntary to complete a passport and at Little Gate we support an individual to complete one if they choose to. The information contained in this document could help you as employer learn how to best communicate with your employee, give instructions, understand sensory sensitivities as well physical and cognitive needs. It also records any agreed reasonable adjustments that have been made and can be updated as they change.

The Department for Work and Pensions have created a [Health Adjustment Passport](#) that covers some of these areas including an easy read version.

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Being part of a team

Anyone new to an organisation wants to be feel welcomed. This is a crucial part of the success of an apprentice. Being part of a team and feeling part of a team can be two different things. To help an individual feel part of team ensure that they are included in any team meetings, social groups or events and consultations.



Regular manager meetings

As well as the 12-week reviews that you and a training provider will conduct between you and your apprentice, it would be beneficial to set up regular fortnightly or monthly meetings to allow for any issues from both sides to be addressed before they escalate. Normally it only takes a brief conversation to resolve an issue and keeping meetings brief with less time between each meeting is advisable.

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Structure & clarity

Provide structure in each day as well as clarity of what is expected from them as an individual. Refer to the language guide in Stage 1 and use the Work Adjustment Passport to modify how requests could be communicated and tasks completed. Provide a list of who to contact for which reason, i.e. Mentors, Managers, HR, Payroll etc.

Support your staff, mentors and managers

It's an adjustment for everyone when an organisation introduces an accessible supported apprenticeship. Ensure that you have provided adequate support for those staff in the form of regular debriefs, in person awareness training and online courses.

Careers & progression

Have you remained in the same role since you first started work? Most of us have a need to learn and develop so consider having these conversations with your apprentice during the regular appraisals.

[Watch and listen to an experienced Apprentice sharing their journey and future career aspirations whilst being on an accessible supported apprenticeship.](#)



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Essential information, support and resources

[Gov.UK has a wealth of information to support you in employing apprentices with disabilities](#)

[Apprenticeship set up guide including links to Training Providers](#)

[DWP Autism and Neurodiversity Toolkit](#)

[British Association of Supported Employment - Supported Apprenticeships](#)

[Dynamic Training - Provider of accessible apprenticeships](#)

[Education & Training Foundation Supports teachers and leaders across the Further Education and Training sector to help them achieve their professional development goals](#)

[Little Gate - Offering accessible supported apprenticeships and employer training](#)

Skills for care Completing the Care Certificate is considered best practice within the Health and Social Care sector. We recommend that potential apprentices commence or are inducted to the baseline knowledge and skills of the Care certificate, before commencing an apprenticeship. This could be via a supported internship or other pre-employment programmes. This provides an excellent building block for any apprentice.

Thank you to the following organisations who have made this guide possible:

