



BeyondAutism Employability Toolkit


A resource for individuals, parents, carers
and employers




















Contents

Welcome to the BeyondAutism employability toolkit.

This toolkit contains a range of information for autistic people, employers and professionals supporting autistic individuals. You will also find information about autism.

Feel free to use just parts of the toolkit, or all of it. It is designed to present a range of options and for you to use the most suitable for your situation.

		For employers	For individuals
	Introduction	4	 
	About BeyondAutism	5	 
	Purpose and aim	6	 
About autism and disability	Autism	8	 
	Hidden disability	9	 
	Wellbeing and employment	10	 
	Disability	11	 
Communication	How do we talk about autism?	12	
	Communication	14	
	Difficulties with communication	16	
Behaviour and sensory needs	Tips for communication	17	
	Behaviour and conduct at work	19	
	How to manage behaviours that challenge in the workplace	20	 
	Sensory needs	21	
	Sensitivity to stimuli	22	
	How can we support people with sensory needs?	23	

Vocational assessment	25		
Vocational assessment example	26		
Vocational assessment - traffic lights	27		
Vocational assessment - development	28		
Vocational profile	29-36		
Reasonable adjustments	37-40		
Resources	41		
Access to work	42		
Definitions of employment-related terms	43-44		
Signposting	45-48		
Notes	49-50		

Each page has coloured tabs running down the edge. The orange labelled pages in this toolkit are designed for employers or professionals who are supporting autistic people into employment. You will find lots of information on autism, tools and resources.

The blue labelled pages are designed specifically for a job seeker or autistic person to use. You will find lots of different pieces of information and templates in the toolkit, which are designed to help you in your search for a job and successful career.


Wellbeing and employment

We know work can have many benefits, more than just earning an income. In 2006, The Department for Work and Pensions commissioned an independent review to explore the health effects of work and unemployment.¹

Conducted by Gordon Waddell and A Kim Burton, they identified 'a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental health and wellbeing'. They identified eight potential benefits for people being in work, these included:

1. That work can be therapeutic
2. Engaging in work will help to promote recovery and rehabilitation
3. Work leads to better long-term health outcomes
4. It minimises the harmful physical, mental, and social effects of long-term sickness absence
5. Work reduces the risk of long-term incapacity
6. Work promotes full participation in society, independence, and human rights
7. It reduces poverty
8. Work improves quality of life and wellbeing

The review highlighted that for these to be attainable, 'account must be taken of the nature and quality of the work and its social context'. Jobs should be safe and accommodating. Aligning work with the individual's aspirations, career goals and strengths will improve their potential success in their role and associated responsibilities.



Over three-quarters (77%) of autistic people who were surveyed by the National Autistic Society who are currently unemployed want to work.²

This toolkit will facilitate autistic people to access work which meets their aspirations and career goals.

¹ See [Work for your health and wellbeing](#), Waddell G, Kim Burton A, 2006.
² See [The hidden employment gap](#), National Autistic Society, 2019.

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Introduction



Unemployment is an increasing challenge following the coronavirus pandemic, making the steps into work even more challenging for autistic people. Pre-pandemic, only 22% of autistic adults of working age were in employment; due in part to a lack of confidence by employers and application processes being a barrier. We have a vision to ensure autistic children and young adults access an education which empowers a life full of choice, independence and opportunity and this includes employability skills. It also includes the tools and training needed for employers to actively support autistic people into roles that they will excel at.

This toolkit, funded by the City Bridge Trust, will give autistic people improved access to, and support in, employment. The colour coded sections make it easy to navigate for people seeking employment and for employers. There is advice for employers about what autism is, how to support autistic individuals, different communication approaches and sensory needs. It is full of useful resources such as person-centred plans, examples of vocational assessments and reasonable adjustments for both the interview stage and whilst in work. Further supported by definitions of employment related terms, advice about Access to Work funding and signposting.

By 2025 we want to see significant change in work place attitudes and perceptions, empowering employers to confidently offer opportunities to autistic people. We also want individuals to develop the necessary skills to make informed choices about their employment, with the support that they need to excel.

Together we can break the cycle of prejudice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Coultas-Pitman".

Tracie Coultas-Pitman
CEO, BeyondAutism

We're delighted that our employability toolkit was crowned winner in the project category for the 2022 Vocational Rehabilitation Awards.



About BeyondAutism

We are experts in delivering autism education services from pre-school to 25. BeyondAutism is a non-profit organisation, driving change in the world of autism education to ensure autistic children and young adults access an education which empowers a life full of choice, independence and opportunity.

We do this by creating positive educational experiences, training for the professional team around a child, and information, resources and support for families and carers.

In 2020, BeyondAutism launched its new strategy with objectives that reflect our aspiration at an individual and societal level.

The change we want to see:



Reduced school placement breakdown

Empowering schools to manage behaviour and remove barriers to learning



Increased employability

With the skills and confidence to enter the work place, promoting independence and broadening opportunities



People with autism have the life skills to live their ideal week

Empowering choice, opportunity and independence



Increased resilience and confidence in families

Because families who are resilient, informed and confident make very different decisions, directly impacting the outcomes for their children



Communities are supported to include people with autism

Breaking the cycle of prejudice so that people with autism have choice and opportunity

How the toolkit is funded

In 2020, City Bridge Trust, the City of London Corporation's charitable funder, made a grant of £178,400 to BeyondAutism spread over five years. The grant was awarded to develop strategies, partnerships, and an employment pathway through our services and beyond, into adulthood.

A key part of the project is the creation of this toolkit to support autistic people in accessing employment.



Purpose and aim

The purpose of the toolkit is to give autistic people better access to, and support in, employment.

It has been designed to help autistic people develop their employment profile. It can also be used by parents, carers or job coaches supporting autistic individuals in finding employment. The toolkit offers support and guidance for employers who are looking to provide more assistance to their employees.

In the following pages you will find a Vocational Profile (page 30), examples of reasonable adjustments (page 37), definitions of employment (page 43), and other types of support that might be useful for yourself or someone you know.

The toolkit can be used as much as is needed. The purpose is for it to be individualised to provide the best support.



About autism and disability



Autism

Autism is part of who a person is. Every individual has a unique and meaningful contribution to make to society. Autism usually appears in the early years of a child's life. However, it can be diagnosed at any stage in a person's life.

Autism can affect a person's communication, relationships, social skills and self-regulation. It is often referred to as a spectrum as each person's experience is unique. Autism is not an illness or disease and cannot be cured. Early intervention, therapies and education can help that person lead a life of choice and opportunity.

700,000

people with a diagnosis of autism in the UK - that's more than 1 in 100. If you include their families, autism is part of daily life for 2.8 million people.²

3

Autism is 3 times more prevalent in boys than girls.¹



21.7%

of autistic adults are in any form of paid employment.³

Neurodiversity

The term "neurodiversity" is the differences within the human brain, compared to someone who is "neurotypical".

Neurodiversity includes Autism, ADHD, Acquired Brain Injury, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Tourette Syndrome, mental health conditions and other health conditions.

Neurodiverse / neurodivergent people can find some things very easy and other things very hard. This can lead to a person appearing to have a 'spikey profile'. This means they may need extra support in some areas, but with the right support can excel in others. For this to happen, it is important workplaces are inclusive and work to reduce barriers. Find out more at geniuswithin.co.uk/what-is-neurodiversity/.

1. The NHS, Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, (2017)

2. The NHS Information Centre, Community and Mental Health Team, Brugha, T. et al (2012). Estimating the prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in adults: extending the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey. Leeds: NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care

3. Office for National Statistics (2021). Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020

Hidden disability

Autism is often described as a 'hidden disability', meaning you cannot determine if someone is autistic just by their appearance. This can cause difficulties for autistic people when interacting with others, and can lead to misunderstandings, confusion and frustration.

Every autistic person is different. Autism is described as a 'spectrum' with everyone presenting with slightly different characteristics.

Not every autistic person will have the same strengths or weaknesses, and it is important to treat all people with dignity and respect.

It's important to have an open mind when working with colleagues, as some of their behaviours may be linked to a hidden disability. Other hidden disabilities might include diabetes, depression, ADHD, chronic pain and mental health conditions.

Hidden Disability Sunflower Lanyard

In recent years, some people with hidden disabilities have chosen to wear the 'Hidden Disability Sunflower Lanyard'. Many people in the community, such as supermarket workers and shop staff, are trained to recognise the lanyard and in many cases will signal that the person may need more time, help or further assistance. The Hidden Disability Sunflower Lanyard does not entitle the wearer to anything other than identifying them as someone with a hidden disability.

As an employer, you can make your workplace more inclusive by training all staff in recognising the Sunflower Lanyard, as well as ensuring staff, who want to, can wear the lanyard at work.



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77%

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This toolkit will facilitate autistic people to access work which meets their aspirations and career goals.

1. Is work good for your health and well-being, Waddell G, Kim Burton A. 2006

2. The autism employment gap, National Autistic Society, 2016

Disability

Disability is one of the “protected characteristics” covered by the Equality Act 2010.

This legislation was introduced to stop discrimination. Discrimination means being treated unfairly because of who you are and can take place at work as well as in wider society.

The protected characteristics in employment are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Thinking about disability differently: Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability was created to view the world differently, to acknowledge that society is the “disabling factor” not a person’s body. It was originally developed in the 1960s and 1970s when disabled people were tired of being excluded from society. Originally, in what is now referred to as the Medical Model of Disability, a person’s medical state was what disabled them. For example, a wheelchair user was talked about as having legs which “don’t work”.

Disabled people were frustrated by constantly being thought of as the problem, having something that did not work, or something which needed to be cured. This made them act and push for their rights.

The Social Model of Disability was introduced to argue that society is the disabler. If a wheelchair user couldn’t enter a building, it wasn’t because they couldn’t walk up the stairs to enter, it was because the building had stairs rather than level access. The disabler is the stairs, and a ramp should be added to previously built buildings, with future builds having level access as standard and taking accessibility into account.

Due to the Social Model of Disability, rights for disabled people, including those with autism and / or learning disabilities have developed. Today the Equality Act 2010 includes disability as a “protected characteristic” that people cannot be discriminated against.

How do we talk about autism?

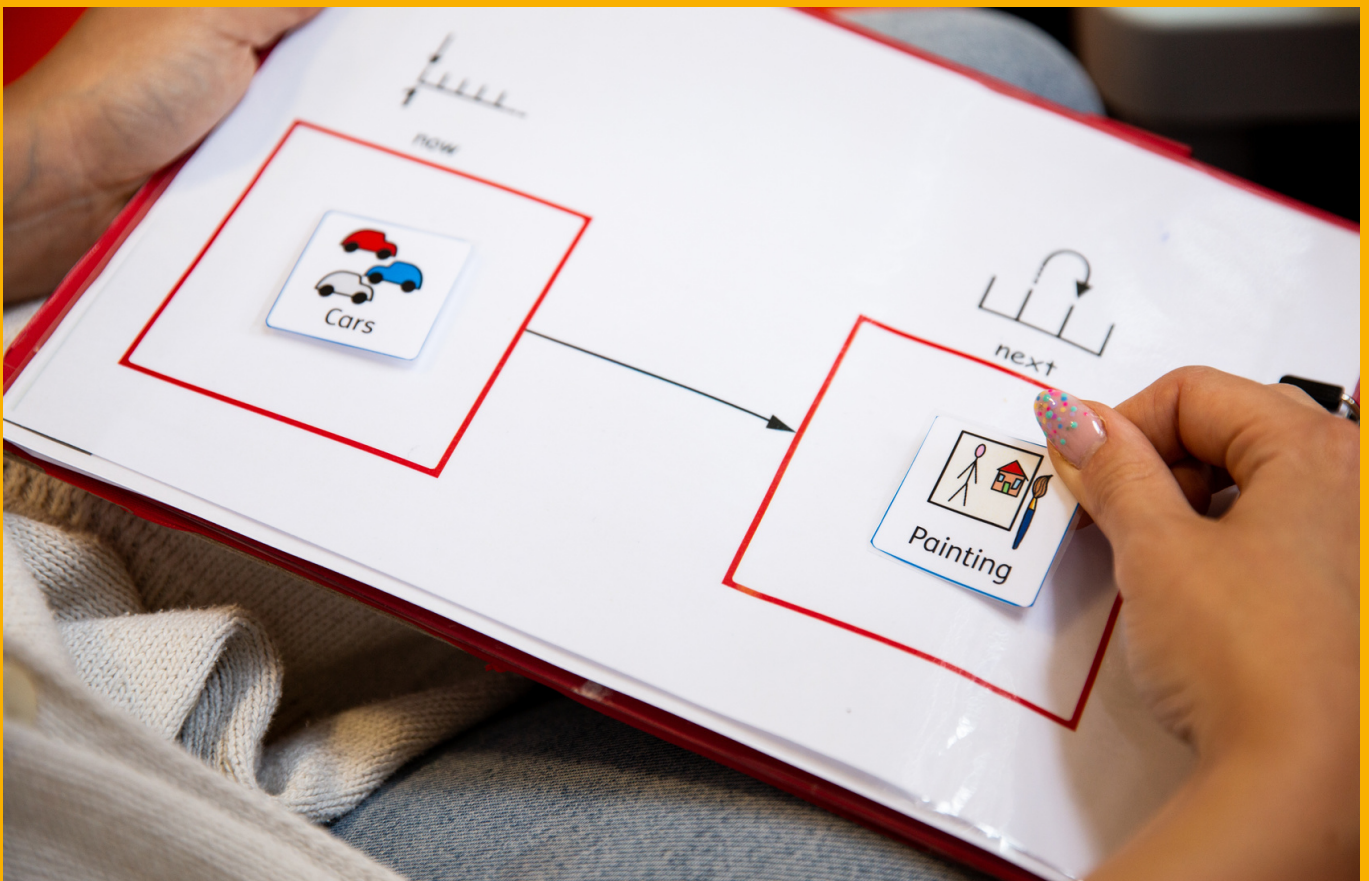
Respectful terminology and language

There are many different terms used to describe autism. Research has been conducted to try and determine the preferences of autistic people, their families and professionals around the language used to describe autism; however, the findings of these studies have shown there is no clear consensus. We also found this when we consulted our key stakeholders about their preferences.

There are strong differing opinions as to the use of person first ('with autism') or identity first ('autistic') language. Some individuals view their autism as a fundamental aspect of their identity and prefer to use identity-first language and refer to themselves as autistic. Others, refer to themselves as a 'person with autism' as they feel their autism doesn't define who they are. Neither approach is wrong and when speaking to an individual it is important to ask their preference.



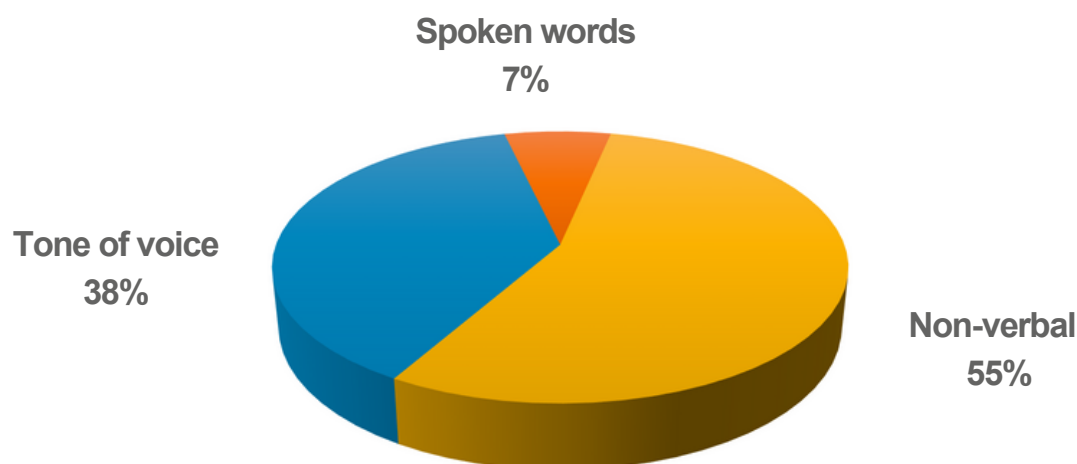
Communication



Communication

We know many autistic people can struggle with social communication and interaction, which means busy work places can often be stressful environments. However, this doesn't mean autistic people cannot work.

Communication is more than just spoken words! It is suggested that only 7% of communication is actually spoken words – everything else is communicated through our body language or tone of voice. Autistic people can sometimes struggle to pick up on body language, gestures or facial expressions. In order to be better understood, it is important we work with a 'total communication' approach.



Think about a smart phone or computer screen. Most of the applications or programmes we use are communicated through an icon or image. We understand what the programme is because we are familiar with the icon. So much of our communication is supported by visuals or written words. Another example is an airport, which needs to communicate directions to people from all over the world. Airports use universal symbols to communicate where toilets, taxis, shops and other essentials are located.

Think about how you could use all the ways to communicate:

- Speech
- Symbols – think about all the Apps on your phone!
- Body language – shrugging, folding arms, turning away
- Facial expression – smiling, frowning, laughing
- Sign & gesture – such as pointing
- Objects of reference – using items to indicate your wants and needs
- Written words

When working with someone who has communication needs, take time to understand the best way to communicate things. Some simple adjustments to how we communicate can have a huge impact on how successful someone is at their job. Some examples might include:

- Instead of verbally explaining a task, model the task – show them how to do it first, so they can copy. Many people remember how to do something more effectively when they physically do it.
- If you can't physically model for someone, make use of pre-recorded videos. This way the employee can watch the video back as a reminder.
- When giving verbal instructions, consider if you can also provide written instructions. Having something to refer to can be very helpful.
- When giving feedback, provide this in writing too, if possible. Also make it clear when you are happy with the work that has been completed. Being vague with feedback can cause confusion, and if there are problems with job performance, they are unlikely to improve if you are not clear.
- If there are pictures available to explain how something should be done, ask the person if they would like to use them as well.
- A big part of getting communication right is making sure the person being supported is involved in the conversation. Get their opinion and thoughts on how they want to be supported.



Difficulties with communication

Communication can be difficult for some autistic people. They may have difficulties initiating interactions or responding to others.

It can sometimes take autistic people longer to formulate a response and react to conversation. They may also find it difficult to follow verbal instructions preferring to have tasks written down.



Autistic people may also find it difficult at times to explain what they are trying to say or they may use a loud voice without realising.

Difficulties with social skills

Autistic individuals may have challenges with:

- understanding body language
- talking about anything other than their interests
- understanding social 'rules'

Body language is not always understood by autistic people, so they may not use gestures (pointing, shrugging shoulders, etc.) to add meaning to their speech. They may avoid eye contact when listening to someone to feel more comfortable having a conversation.

Reading facial expressions and understanding social rules around personal space can also be difficult for autistic people.

These factors combine to make it frustrating for the individual to get across their thoughts and feelings. Being aware of a person's unique challenges will help in deciphering the reasonable adjustments required to support that individual in the workplace.

As an employer, knowing this information is really important, and will help to form a better understanding.

Tips for communication

Autistic people can have difficulty when it comes to processing information and need extra time to respond. When communicating with an autistic person, you might need to make changes to how you would usually communicate.

Processing information and time to respond

- Limit how much you say, and be careful not to be patronising.
- Slow down your delivery, if needed.
- Use specific words and emphasis.
- Allow time between what you have said and the expected response.
- Limit the number of questions posed, otherwise you might not get the best possible answers.
- Ask an individual's preference. Some may be happy with verbal instructions whilst others may prefer them in writing.



Receptive language – how people understand language

- Find out the best way to share instructions with each individual. Would they benefit from things being written down or presented visually?
- Think about slowing down your speech and reducing the amount of information you are giving at one time.
- Don't repeat the same instruction over and over again - say it once clearly and allow the person to process the information at their own pace.
- Check that the person has understood by asking them to confirm what is expected of them.

Expressive language

- The person may have limited verbal language skills and will be using Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC).
- AAC can be anything from using sign language to using visuals to communicate their needs through a communication book or using a tablet / device.
- Allow the person to ask questions at their own pace and seek clarification together if needed.
- Their speech may be impaired and might not be clear. Work together to seek clarification - written or visual support may help.
- Consider whether an interpreter might be needed, e.g. a sign language interpreter.
- Technology can be a great thing – texting might be a useful way to communicate too!



Behaviour and sensory needs



Behaviour and conduct at work

Each workplace is different; however, every employer expects a level of professional behaviour and conduct from their employees.

Treating everyone with respect, being polite and courteous to colleagues is the standard requirement.

Sometimes autistic people can be thought of as being too direct and / or tactless. This is not done on purpose to upset anyone; it is often as a result of not understanding the social rules which many of us take for granted.

Behaviour as communication

- All behaviour serves a function. There is a reason why the individual engages in it. This is relevant to all people, not just autistic people.
- Some behaviour may appear unusual to someone who is observing it. This is more likely when the observer is neurotypical, and the individual is autistic.
- Even when a behaviour appears unusual, it may be helping the individual to focus on a difficult task, or to relax in a situation that is making them anxious.
- Some behaviours could be self-stimulatory such as rocking at the desk or tapping a pen. These behaviours would be helpful to the individual and everyone has this type of behaviour to an extent to calm their nerves and / or increase concentration.

Self-stimulatory behaviour

Self-stimulatory behaviour or 'stimming' are repetitive behaviours which provide sensory satisfaction for an individual. Everyone has self-stimulatory behaviours – it could be fiddling with hair, bouncing a leg or chewing on a pen. Reasons for self-stimulatory behaviour will vary. It is often an attempt to increase or suppress sensory input.

Recognising that self-stimulatory behaviour serves a purpose for individuals, it is not something that you should try to change, unless the behaviour is dangerous to the individual and those around them, or acts as a barrier to the individual succeeding. You can support this by ensuring you respect those that display self-stimulatory behaviour by not staring or making them feel uncomfortable.



How to manage behaviours that challenge in the workplace

Behaviours that challenge can be anything that prevent an individual from interacting with others socially or engaging in a task / activity that they need to.

- The behaviours that challenge can be low level such as not listening to instructions, vocal / physical repetition of phrases / motor movements or not being able to focus for an extended period.
- They may also include aggression, self-injury or absconding.

Tips for the employer / job coach

- Develop as many proactive strategies as possible to support the employee and create reasonable adjustments.
- Proactive strategies are things that are in place before behaviours that challenge occur, that reduce the chance of them occurring in the first place. This could include:
 - additional breaks worked into the daily routine
 - quiet spaces to access across the day
 - breaking the work down into smaller achievable targets
 - extra feedback sessions
 - provide regular meetings with the individual so they have a chance to learn the workplace culture and what is required of them socially
 - if the employee has an advocate, include them in the conversations regarding support - but only if you have permission to do so



- Identify alternative replacement behaviours to take the place of behaviours that challenge:
 - If the individual covers their ears due to the buzz of a computer, provide ear defenders / headphones

Tips for the employee

- Communicate your needs with your job coach / employer.
- If you have strategies that help you manage in different situations, talk to your job coach / employer about how they could be used at work.

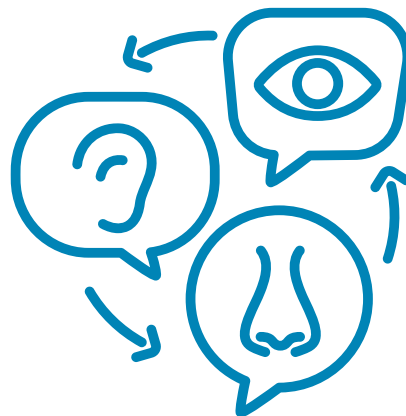
Sensory needs

Identifying our senses

There are eight senses, five that most people know about and three that are less well known.

The five most known ones are:

- smell
- taste
- touch
- vision
- hearing



The three less well known senses are:

- proprioception (body awareness)
- vestibular (sense of movement and balance)
- interoception (internal sensation e.g. hunger)

Sensory difficulties

Autistic people may have difficulties with sensory processing. This is where sensory information goes into the brain but does not get organised into appropriate responses. Instead it is perceived and / or responded to differently.

This can mean that people can be over- or under- sensitive to certain situations.

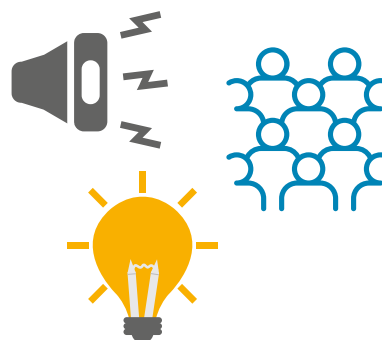


Sensitivity to stimuli

Less sensitive or more sensitive?

People who are over-sensitive to sensory input only need a little bit of input before their brain responds. A little can seem like a lot which can be overwhelming for some people. Some examples of over-sensitivity might be:

- Finding the noise of a hand dryer very uncomfortable
- Being unable to wear certain clothes fabrics
- Finding lights or computer screens in the office too bright
- Feeling uncomfortable when in busy settings with lots of people



People who are under-sensitive to sensory input need a lot of input before their brains respond. A lot can feel like a little. Some examples of under-sensitivity might be:

- Not responding when someone calls their name
- Fidgeting or moving a lot while sitting
- Pacing up and down the office when thinking
- Chewing on the top of their pen or sleeve
- Drinking very hot or ice cold drinks to stay alert

What might sensory overload look like?

- Difficulty focusing
- Irritability
- Restlessness or frustration
- Covering eyes or ears
- Moving away from people or sounds
- Stress, anxiousness or fear
- Difficulty regulating breathing



Important to remember

Not every autistic person will experience sensory input in the same way. Individual experiences will vary. For example, when a person is tired, sensitivities may become more significant. Sensory sensitivities can also change over time.

How can we support people with sensory needs?

Be aware of everyone's sensory needs wherever possible.

Try to adapt yourself and your environment, where you can, to meet a person's sensory needs e.g. providing headphones in loud spaces or allowing a person to leave a room if they become overwhelmed.

Don't assume that every autistic individual has the same sensory needs. If they disclose any specific sensory preferences or needs, listen to them and respect their differences. Ask them what you can do to support them and have an open mind to making reasonable adjustments. Some things to consider when thinking about sensory needs:

- Background noises, such as air conditioning in office spaces, or the sound of machinery
- Brightness of lights in office spaces
- The location of windows and doors, and the amount of people walking by
- Phones ringing / beeping

There are lots of ways to support sensory needs. These might include the positioning of desks or tables, wearing sunglasses or ear defenders, or closing / opening a door. The best way to understand how to meet sensory needs is through talking to the individual / employer directly.



Approaches to support



Vocational Assessment

What is a Vocational Assessment?

A Vocational Assessment is a person-centred tool, often called a Skills Assessment. It can be used to observe an employee during their work and assess the level of their support needs.

It can also be used during work experience or volunteering, so an individual knows what skills they need help with before starting their career.

Over the next couple of pages are examples of different types of Vocational Assessments. They can be modified to suit your job role and tasks.



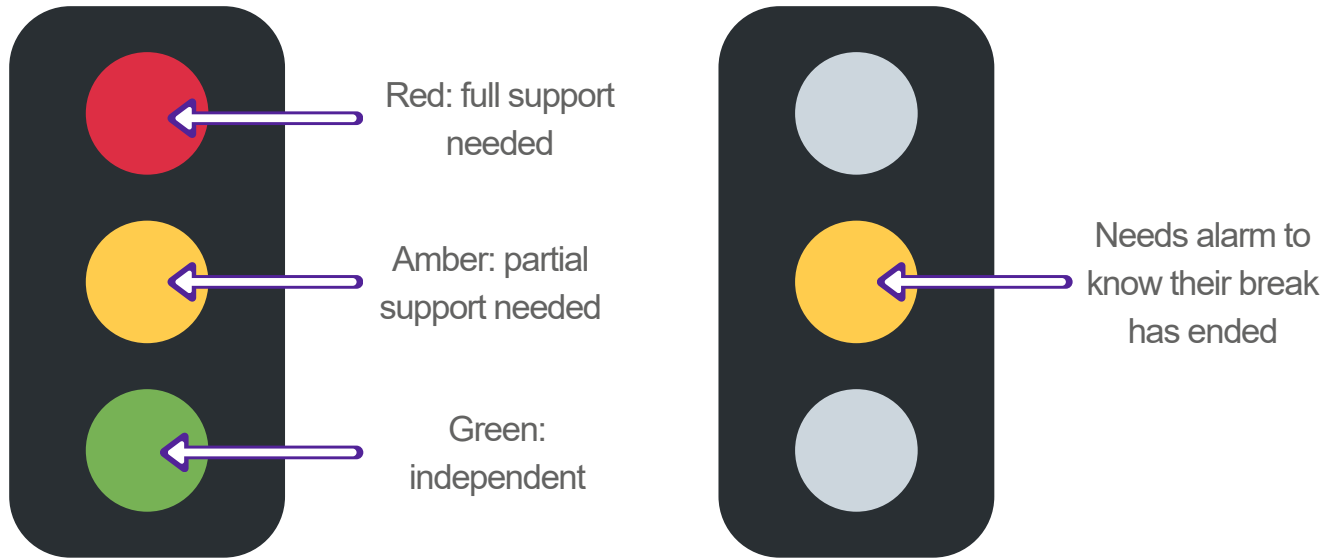
Vocational Assessment example

Assessment	Support needed (0 = no support, 5 = substantial support)	Support plan
Computer skills – able to use computer		
Computer skills – able to send email		
Computer skills – able to search internet		
Maths skills – able to be on time		
Maths skills – able to use money		
English skills – able to write		
English skills – able to read		
Travel – able to walk around local area confidently		
Travel – able to travel on public transport		
Communication used		

Vocational Assessment – traffic lights

A traffic light system could be introduced to the assessment tool above for tasks that individuals need support with.

This could be used for each task to show an individual's support needs and progress. It could also just be used on specific tasks that they find difficult.



Assessment	Full support needed	Partial support needed	No support needed
Computer skills – able to use computer			
Computer skills – able to send email			
Computer skills – able to search internet			
Maths skills – able to be on time		Needs alarm on phone	
Maths skills – able to use money	Needs full support counting		
English skills – able to write			Independent

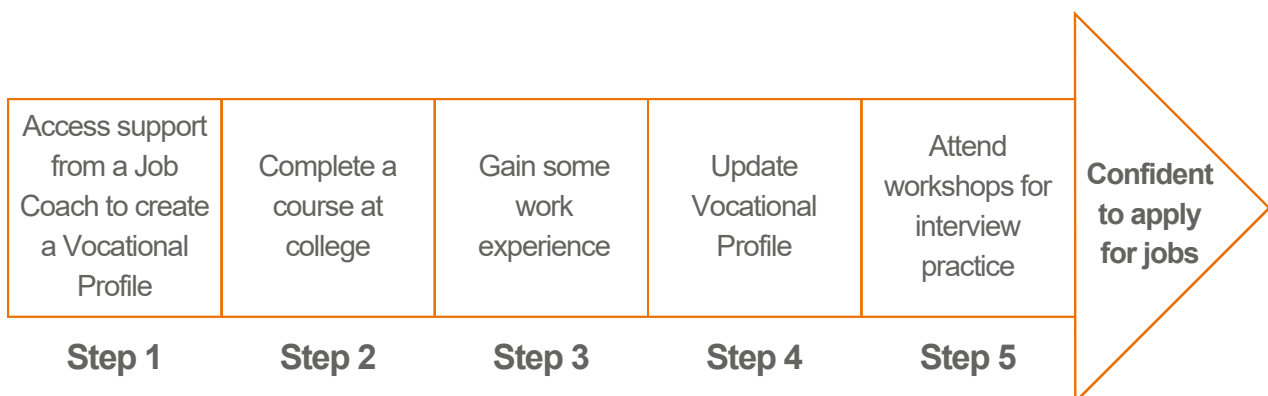
Vocational Assessment – development

Identifying where an individual needs support is the first step. To help the individual become more independent and feel at ease with the tasks expected of them, it is important to put a plan in place with them.

Objectives can be broken down into smaller targets so that the ultimate goal becomes less daunting. Targets should fit in with the SMART framework: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. The tool below is a way of visualising the steps needed to achieve one of these goals.



For example



Vocational Profile

What is a Vocational Profile?



A Vocational Profile is a person-centred tool used to capture vital information about someone's skills and career aspirations. It can be used to see what support they might need in the workplace, what their interests are to determine what job they would like to do, or what skills and / or training courses they need to improve to get a job in the field they would like.

Vocational Profiles should be individualised and updated regularly to make sure they stay up to date.

During line management meetings, or meetings with a Job Coach / Employment Advisor, Vocational Profiles should be the main focus. They can be used as a form of communication to ensure the support someone has is not too much or too little. This will help to ensure an individual is as successful as possible in work.



Vocational Profile

This profile belongs to:			
This profile should not be shared without prior permission			
Date of birth:			
Date written:		Date reviewed:	
Intolerances / dietary needs:			
Allergies / health conditions:			
<p>When I feel happy I act:</p> 			
<p>When I feel sad I act:</p> 			
<p>If I am overwhelmed I need:</p>			

Vocational Profile

Plans that support my activities

Behaviour support plan:

Care plan:

Personal emergency evacuation plan:

Health / medical plan:

Other plans:

My communication

I communicate using:

Important things you can do to support my communication:

Vocational Profile

People who are important to me and support me

Name and relationship:

They are important because:

I would like this plan to be shared with

Name:

How will it be shared and communicated:

Vocational Profile

Planning my day

A good day for me looks like:

Good times of the day for me are:

Things that need to happen during the day to meet my needs:

Who will support me with travel and transitions:

Vocational Profile

<p>What's important to me about my employment?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>What good support looks like for me in employment:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Skills</p>	
<p>Transferrable skills I have:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Skills I would like to improve:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.

Vocational Profile

Previous experience		
Job title / position:	Work activity:	How I contributed:

Job roles / duties	
The types of job role or duties I am suited to based on my qualities and abilities:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
This is what I can do to show I am engaged:	

Vocational Profile

Making an inclusive workplace:

What will help make a workplace inclusive for me:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Adjustments agreed with employer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Signed by the individual:

Signed by the employer:

Reasonable adjustments

When making a reasonable adjustment for an autistic employee, you might find that it is best practice for all employees. What helps one employee, might help others too.

Employers must make a reasonable adjustment to support employees in the workplace by law (Equality Act 2010). The type of adjustments required will depend on an individual's needs.

They aren't about providing individuals with an advantage – they are in place for equality.

Thinking differently

When considering reasonable adjustments, it is often useful to ask the question 'why not?' Just because things have always been done a certain way, doesn't mean they always need to be done that way. Reasonable adjustments can open a wide range of ways of assessing 'talent'.

For example: A traditional interview might not be the best (or most inclusive way) of recruiting for a role which is highly physical or hands on.



Application stage

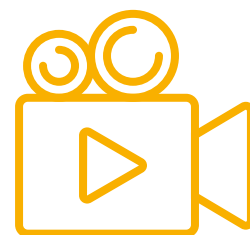
The application stage could be made more inclusive for all applicants.

Paper copies of application forms could be made available in large print. They could also be offered with pictures / symbols.

Rather than completing an application form, potential candidates could send their CV, or create a video about why they want the job.

Offer potential candidates to book a time slot to support with their application and / or allow a job coach to support.

Job coaches can offer help with the application process.





Interview stage

Interviews could be more accessible in a number of ways.

When inviting people to an interview, try and be flexible when offering a time or day. When sending the location of the meeting, include key information such as local train stations and bus routes. Be clear how long the interview is likely to take, and include any information on documents they may need to bring (such as ID). Ensure to ask about any accessibility requirements.

During the actual interview, you might consider some of the following adjustments (remember, ask first to see if they are appropriate):

- Seen questions – give the questions to all candidates ahead of interview so they are able to prepare their answers.
- Job coach in attendance – allow a job coach or employment advisor to attend the interview with the candidate so they can feel confident and be prompted when needed.



- Work trial – allow the candidate to show what they can do.
- Video interviews rather than in person interview – some people prefer to be interviewed via a video call as they find it less intimidating and have less of a sensory overload.

- Provide candidates with photos – this could be photos of the interview panel and the room the interview will be held in. This can reduce anxiety.
- Conducting interviews in a room which won't lead to sensory overload – use a quiet space without too many lights. Make sure there are no interruptions.

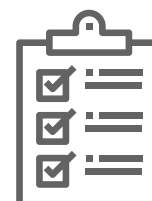




In work

What reasonable adjustments are needed will depend on the type of role as well as the individual employee. Here are some common examples which can be applied to most workplaces.

- Task list – this can include a mixture of words, photos and symbols (depending on the employee's needs) to make sure each task is completed, and if necessary, in the correct order.
- Timetables – again these can be presented in several ways – they could be used for time in work, so the employee knows where they need to be and when, or they could be adapted for use at home, to help the employee be on time and remember what they need for work.

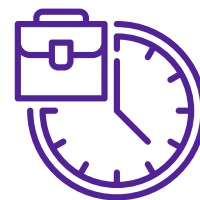


- Written instructions – some employees may need written instructions to learn how to do a task. Speak to the employee directly to find out what is best for them, however writing a task step by step is often the most useful.
- Visual instructions – some employees may need visual instructions, such as screenshots or photos of how to complete a task.

- 'Contracting' – for meetings, consider spending time ensuring everyone knows what the expectation is for a meeting. For example: levels of contribution; if virtual, expectations regarding appearance, camera on or off?
- Regular feedback – hold regular 1:1 sessions with the employee so they can discuss any concerns and receive feedback for their work. Setting agendas or using a form will help keep the meeting on track and embed a coaching approach to support.



- Set break times – some employees might need to be given set break times so they know when to take their lunch break.
- If something is changing in the routine let the employee know with as much notice as possible. For example, if a member of staff is having a birthday and the team are stopping work to have a slice of cake, let the employee know a day or two beforehand and then remind them on the day. This is also the case if someone is leaving and there is a social gathering.



- Explain workplace culture – if everyone takes it in turn to make cups of tea let that employee know. Some work places chip in for a gift when someone has a birthday and other workplaces don't. Don't expect your employee to know what you do at your business.
- Photos of team – make sure this is updated regularly when someone leaves or a new member of staff joins the team.

- Mood board – it could be useful for an employee to have a card on their desk to communicate with colleagues how they are feeling that day and if they want to be left to get on with their work or if they would like to be spoken to.
- Extra time – allow an employee extra time to learn and complete their task. Spending more time at the start with an employee will likely have better outcomes for 'business' and the retention of the individual.



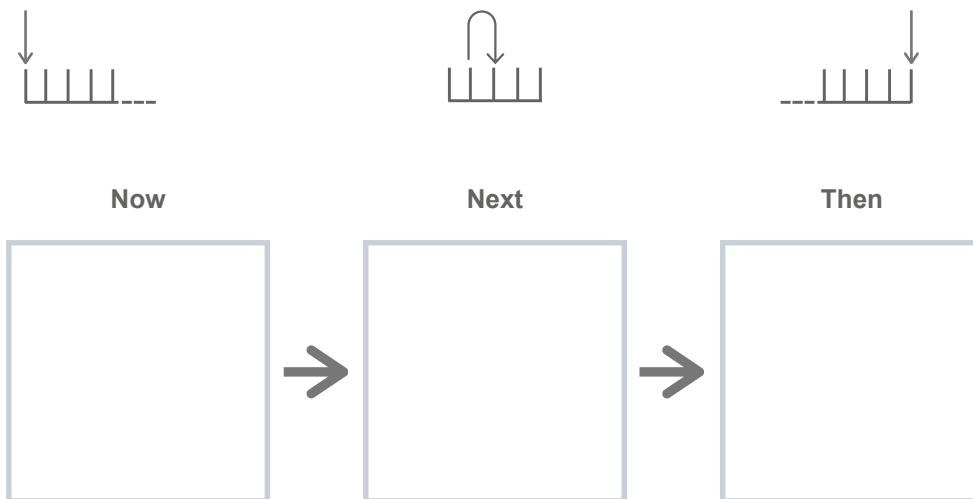
- Quiet space – allow employees a chance to take a short break in a quiet space when needed. Agree where this space is.
- Buddy systems – consider developing a buddy system for new employees. Pairing an experienced employee with a new one. Be careful regarding the sharing of personal information without permission.

Resources

Here you will find some examples of resources you could use in your workplace. They might need to be adapted to suit you / your employee and might not all be applicable – remember to take a person-centred approach. Download the accompanying pack to find blank templates of the following resources: beyondautism.org.uk/toolkit.

Now / next board

Some employees would benefit from a now / next board – this is a visual aid which shows someone what task they are focusing on at the present moment and what will happen next. They can also be extended to a three-step board which is now / next / then – this is useful for showing the first task, second task and then break or home time.



Task lists

Task lists can be used to ensure an employee understands everything they need to do in their role.

Social story

A social story can be useful especially during a transition period. If someone is starting a new job (or their first job) a social story could be created to help process the new information and change in their life. This can also be used to explain role changes, or new / leaving colleagues.

Timetables

Timetables can be used in a number of ways. Someone who struggles with getting to work on time could have a home timetable, scheduled so they know what to do and at what time so they can arrive on time. They can also be used in work so an employee has a visual aid to understand what their day and / or week looks like.

Access to Work

Access to Work is funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support those with a disability or long-term health condition who may be at a disadvantage of finding or sustaining work due to their condition.

It can be used to support at interview stage, and help a company make “reasonable adjustments” to keep a disabled employee in work. It can also be used to support with travel costs, for example paying for taxis to and from work because someone might not be able to commute on public transport due to their condition.

The amount awarded is dependent on an individual’s circumstances. Medical history is considered and sometimes a doctor’s note is needed. Once you apply for Access to Work you will be assigned a case worker who will support you. You will be assessed in the workplace, and a recommendation will be made of what adjustments the employer should make. Your case worker will request further information. This can be a copy of a formal diagnosis and quotes based on the support you need (e.g. how much a job coach would charge per hour, how much a taxi to work would cost, or the cost of adapted equipment).

Your employer will be contacted by your case worker; you can put your manager down to be contacted. They will need to provide Access to Work with some information such as how many people the company employs. If you work for a large organisation your employer might have to contribute towards the recommended adjustments. Your case worker will explain all of this to you, however you can also get support from a friend, family member and / or through a charity.

More information can be found at the DWP’s website: [gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)



Definitions of employment-related terms

When we think about employment, we think about it in its broadest term. That means we include thinking about what “meaningful activity” is.

There are different types of employment and different words that are used throughout the toolkit. Here you can find some definitions of the main types of employment terms used within this document.

Fixed-term employment

You will be employed for a fixed amount of time (for example 6 months or 12 months).

Full-time

Full-time employment is when you work for more than 35 hours per week. It can be fixed hours and days, for example Monday – Friday 9am-5pm, but it can also be spread over different shifts throughout the week.

Living Wage

The Living Wage is what economists have calculated to be the lowest amount people can be paid to live off without struggling to pay their bills.

Meaningful activity

Meaningful activity will depend on what activity is being done, how and where the activity takes place and if it is a voluntary or paid activity. What is meaningful to one person might not be to another. The best way to know if something is a meaningful activity is to ask.

National Minimum Wage (NMW)

The National Minimum Wage is the least amount an employer can pay you per hour by law. How much you are paid is dependent on age.

Paid work

Paid work is any job where you are paid for your time. This can be as a one-off (temporary role) or in a permanent job.

Part-time

Part-time employment is when you work for anything up to 35 hours per week.

Permanent employment.

You will be employed on a permanent basis – unless you decide to leave.

Supported internship

A supported internship will provide you with real work experience in a working environment. Supported internships are usually linked with a college and usually follow an academic year calendar. You will be given support from a job coach who will help to teach you any tasks in a specific role that you might otherwise struggle to learn. You will experience what it is like to have a job and will be able to use the employer as reference when applying for paid work at the end of the internship.

Temporary employment

Similar to fixed-term employment, you will be employed on a temporary basis, however a specific end date isn't always said at the start of the work.

Volunteering

Volunteering is when somebody has free time so they use their skills and knowledge to give back to a charity or their local community. For example, someone could volunteer in a charity shop one day per week. It can also be used by people to gain experience in an area they would like to work in.

Work experience

Work experience is usually done before you start working. You get a taste of what a job is like. Placements are often organised through school or college and are for a specific length of time.

Work trial

A work trial is given by an employer when they want to make sure an individual is right for the job. They can often be done in place of a traditional interview, or after an interview. This makes sure the person being considered for the role can meet the requirements of the job and it also gives the individual the opportunity of trying out a job before fully committing. Some work trials are paid but many are not, it is down to the employer's discretion.

Zero hours

Zero hours is a term used to describe a type of employment contract. The employer is not obligated to give the employee any specific hours, and the employee does not have to work a specific number of hours.

Signposting

Below is a list of some organisations, charities and services which can provide further employment support.

BeyondAutism

We are here to support. If you have any questions please get in touch
Or you can scan the QR code to visit the BeyondAutism website and find more employability resources.



- Web: beyondautism.org.uk
- Email: employment@beyondautism.org.uk
- Tel: 020 3031 9705

Access to Work

Support from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help pay for any reasonable adjustments you or your employee might need in the workplace.

- Web: gov.uk/access-to-work
- Tel: 08001217579

Ambitious About Autism

A London-based Autism charity which has various employment programmes. Visit their website to find out more.

- Web: ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment
- Email: info@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk
- Tel: 020 8815 5444

Balance CIC

Based in South London, Balance is a small but growing organisation providing a range of services to vulnerable people, that are designed to promote their independence and quality of life.

- Web: balancesupport.org.uk/balance-services/employment-support-team
- Email: info@balance-cic.com
- Tel: 020 3468 3070

British Association for Supported Employment (BASE)

BASE is a national organisation who oversee everything related to supported employment. They have a lot of resources and more information about organisations, charities, and local authorities who can help.

- Web: base-uk.org
- Email: admin@base-uk.org
- Tel: 01204 880733

CareTrade

Supporting and preparing people with autism for employment. Find out more about what they do on their website.

- Web: care-trade.org
- Email: info@caretrade.org.uk
- Tel: 020 3375 6288

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice is a network of 316 independent charities throughout the United Kingdom that give free, confidential information and advice to assist people with money, legal, consumer and other problems. Visit their website to find support local to you.

- Web: citizensadvice.org.uk/work

Discovery

Discovery supports people with learning disabilities and / or autism in Somerset to get more from life.

- Web: discovery-uk.org
- Email: supported.employment@discovery-uk.org
- Tel: 0300 303 9013

Employment Autism

Supporting autistic people to have fulfilling and productive working relationships in inclusive and positive environments.

- Web: employmentautism.org.uk/
- Email: info@employmentautism.org.uk
- Tel: 07703 666401

Forward2Employment

Forward2Employment works alongside Fortis Trust to support young people to find permanent and purposeful employment.

- Web: forward2employment.co.uk
- Email: office@forward2employment.co.uk
- Tel: 01634 683990

Leonard Cheshire

Leonard Cheshire are a national charity which offers services to people with disabilities. They have national and regional employment programmes, dependent on needs. Visit their website to find a service that suits you.

- Web: leonardcheshire.org/get-support/working
- Email: info@leonardcheshire.org
- Tel: 020 3242 0200

Mencap

A national charity which offers advice and support to people with learning disabilities and autism. They have national employment services. Visit their website to find your local service.

- Web: [mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment-services](https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment-services)
- Email: employment.support@mencap.org.uk
- Tel: 0808 808 1111

my AFK

my AFK is an organisation that supports disabled children and young people by providing mobility equipment, education, training, employment support and promoting self-advocacy.

- Web: [my-afk.org](https://www.my-afk.org)
- Email: info@my-afk.org
- Tel: 020 8347 8111

National Autistic Society

A national charity which offers a range of support and advice about autism. In the link below you can find information about local employment services that they offer.

- Web: [autism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/autism-work-programme](https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/autism-work-programme)
- Email: supportcare@nas.org.uk
- Tel: 0808 800 1050

Preparing For Adulthood

Giving everyone equal life choices as they move into adulthood. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) find out more on their website.

- Web: [preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/employment](https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/employment)
- Email: info@preparingforadulthood.org.uk
- Tel: 07593 443740

Remploy

The UK's leading disability specialist, transforming lives through sustainable employment. Visit their website for information about support near you.

- Web: [remploy.co.uk](https://www.remploy.co.uk)
- Email: employmentservices.osc@remploy.co.uk
- Tel: 0300 456 8110

See Ability

A 220-year-old charity who support people with sight loss and multiple disabilities including learning disabilities. Find out more about their supported employment programme on their website.

- Web: [seeability.org/supported-employment-ready-willing-and-able](https://www.seeability.org/supported-employment-ready-willing-and-able)
- Email: rwa@seeability.org
- Tel: 01372 755 000

Scope

A national charity which offers advice and support to people with disabilities. They have a national employment programme. Visit their website for services which are local to you.

- Web: scope.org.uk/employment-services
- Email: helpline@scope.org.uk
- Tel: 0808 800 3333

Status Employment

Status Employment is a charity which helps people with disabilities and mental health problems back to work.

- Web: statusemployment.org.uk
- Tel: 020 8655 3344 (Croydon)
- Tel: 020 3228 6826 (Lambeth)

Vocational Rehabilitation Association (VRA)

The VRA is a group of charities and organisations which specialise in employment support dependant on need. They also work collaboratively to share skills, knowledge and best practice. Visit their website for more information.

- Web: vrassociationuk.com
- Email: enquiries@vrassociation.org.uk

This resource is provided free of charge as our priority is to improve employment opportunities for autistic adults. If you found this toolkit to be a helpful resource, please consider supporting our charity so that we can continue to research, create and share this and similar resources for free.



BeyondAutism

info@beyondautism.org.uk

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