

Guide for Disabled Staff

Scenario 1: I have been offered a job at the University of Wolverhampton and I am due to start in the next couple of months.

1. What information will I be sent relating to support for my disability?

You will be asked to complete a Personal Health and Capability Declaration form when you receive your terms and conditions of employment. Following the review of the form by our Occupational Health Service, you may be asked to attend a meeting, where your personal requirements will be discussed and any recommendations will be sent confidentially to your line manager.

As a new member of staff, during your probationary period you will take part in regular one to one meetings with your line manager. This two-way review of progress is a good time to discuss any reasonable adjustments such as how work is undertaken on a day-to-day basis; and/or the physical features of your office/ premises to ensure accessibility etc.

You will have access to the [University's Disabled Staff Network](#) and you can speak in confidence to a member of the Human Resources directorate.

2. What IT equipment will I have access to and how do I get any specialist hardware and software installed?

You will be provided with the hardware and software required to carry out your role. For a comprehensive A-Z listing of all available University software, please visit the University's [software catalogue](#)

We also have a list of University assistive software and how to access it: https://wolvs.service-now.com/kb_view.do?sysparm_article=KB0010297. This includes Inspiration, via AppsAnywhere for any device.

In addition, Microsoft 365 have a range of accessibility tools for a University MS 365 account - they can be accessed here: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/office-accessibility-center-resources-for-people-with-disabilities-ecab0fcf-d143-4fe8-a2ff-6cd596bddd6d?wt.mc_id=otc_home

Should there be any specific equipment required, for example, Dragon speech recognition software for dyslexia, then this can be requested through your line manager. They will need to process the request with the IT Service Desk, which will be assigned to the software manager, who will then liaise with you about your requirements, when and how to set it up.

3. Where will I be working? Has any specialist equipment been ordered e.g. desk or chairs or lighting?

Your work location will be usually be discussed at the interview stage and confirmed in your offer letter and terms and conditions of employment. If you have a requirement for any specialist equipment, if you could let your line manager know before you join to enable the University to source the necessary equipment and ensure it is in place before your start date.

If it is likely that any specialist equipment will cost more than £1,000, it might be that an application to [Access to Work](#) is appropriate.

You should contact Access to Work as soon as you accept the job offer to ensure that any support is in place before you start, or at least within your first 6 weeks of employment with the University, as AtW will be able to pay up to 100% of any approved costs in this timeframe.

Where will my working space be? Can I attend the university before I start working to orientate myself?

If you contact your line manager, they may be able to agree a time to visit and view your working space. Please be advised however that with current measures around the pandemic and in line with the current national lockdown restrictions, the University is not able to allow staff on campus unless they are critical workers, therefore any visits will have to wait until it is safe to do so. Up to date Information relating to our safety measures can be found in our [Road to Reopening pages](#) and our [staff FAQs](#).

Who do I contact to discuss my needs?

If you think you may need specialist equipment or any specific training, it is recommended that you contact [Access to Work](#) to make an application for support.

Within the University, your Line Manager, HR Business Partner or HR Advisor will be able to assist you. To find your HR Business Partner and HR Advisor's contact details, please visit: <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/staff/services/humanresources/about-us/>. Additional support with completing any Access to Work application can be provided by the University's Talent Attraction Manager, Arun Bhatia.

[Scenario 2: I work at the University and I have recently been diagnosed with a disability.](#)

1. Who do I contact to discuss my change in circumstances?

You should discuss your change in circumstances with your line manager, or if this is not possible, your HR Business Partner will be able to advise you.

2. How do I get an assessment for my needs?

The University has an Occupational Health Service, which is in place to support employers and employees and create a safe and legally compliant working environment.

Your line manager or Human Resources Advisor/Business Partner can make a referral, with your permission, to attend an appointment with an Occupational Health Advisor. More information can be found here: <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/staff/services/humanresources/health-and-wellbeing/occupational-health/>

3. Who would pay for any adaptations that I need for IT or work space?

Should the adaptation be considered as a reasonable adjustment, then the University will cover the cost.

If the help you need at work is not covered by reasonable adjustments (for example, it is financially not viable), you may be able to get help from [Access to Work](#).

Access to Work offers support based on your needs, which may include a grant to help cover the costs of practical support in the workplace, including:

- special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help you do things like answer the phone or go to meetings

- help getting to and from work

[Appendix A](#) provides some examples of how the costs under Access to work would apply depending on different scenarios.

4. How do I get these assessments done?

Your Line Manager or Human Resources Advisor/Business Partner will complete a form to refer you to Occupational for an assessment.

With Access to Work support, you can apply online directly at <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply>. Alternatively, you can apply by calling the Access to Work helplines available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. Make sure you have all the necessary details with you when you call.

Access to Work helpline

Telephone: 0800 121 7479

Textphone: 0800 121 7579

[Relay UK](#) (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 121 7479

British Sign Language (BSL) video relay service

To use this you must first [check you can use the service](#)

[Go to the video relay service](#)

Additional support with completing any Access to Work application can be provided by the University's Head of Equality and Diversity, Will Cooling.

5. How can my work role change to adapt to my needs? And who do I discuss this with?

At your Occupational Health meeting, the OH Advisor or Physician will discuss potential adaptations to your workspace or role. A confidential report will then be sent on to your line manager and copied to your HR Business partner to consider any reasonable adjustments, as recommended by the OH advisor.

Below are examples of the sort of adjustments that may be possible to adapt to your needs:

- reallocating work;
- transfer to another post or another place of work;
- flexibility to working hours;
- providing training or retraining;
- making instructions and manuals more accessible;

Any changes to your role or location will only take place with your consultation.

[Scenario 3: My work role has changed and I now find that my disability needs are different.](#)

1. Who do I need to contact to discuss the needs of my new role?

You should discuss your change in needs resulting from your new role with your line manager, or if this is not possible, your HR Business Partner will be able to advise you.

2. Will the change of my needs impact on my prospect for promotion

Your personal change in needs will result in no detrimental impact on your promotion.

The University is committed to ensuring that the process of recruitment and selection is fair, systematic, efficient and effective, ensuring equality of opportunity and proactively seeks to avoid unfair bias in its processes

Reasonable adjustments will be made to all stages of the recruitment process, including promotions, as required.

3. What happens if I find difficulties within my new role that weren't initially identified?

The best thing to do is to speak with your line manager and discuss the difficulties that you are now facing. If you are unable to do this, or feel uncomfortable approaching them to discuss, please contact your HR Business Partner or Advisor who will be able to assist.

4. What reasonable adjustments can be made?

Some examples of reasonable adjustments include the following:

Doing things in another way

Allowing an employee with social anxiety to have their own desk instead of hot-desking, providing minutes and papers in advance of meetings for visually impaired employees, in a suitable format for the relevant screen reader.

Making physical changes to the workplace

Structural or other physical changes such as widening a doorway, providing a ramp or moving furniture for a wheelchair user; relocation of light switches, door handles, or shelves for someone who has difficulty in reaching; or providing appropriate contrast in decor to help the safe mobility of a visually impaired employee. Taking steps to reduce noise or adjust lighting (e.g. installing barriers/boards).

Changing equipment

Providing a modified keyboard if an employee has arthritis of the hand or purchasing assistive software like voice recognition software. A large screen for a visually impaired employees or an adapted telephone for an employee with a hearing impairment.

Access to information:

Ensuring the availability and use of appropriate ways to give and receive information such as being able to provide job descriptions in alternative media, accepting job applications in typescript rather than handwriting, or by modifying instructions or reference manuals.

Changes to working patterns, hours or ways of working

Agreement to change start and finish times, have longer or more frequent break times, regular or occasional working from home where possible through flexible working to attend appointments or therapies to help manage their condition. Changing working hours to allow easier travel to work

Providing training for colleagues

Providing colleagues with deaf/hearing impairment awareness training in conducting meetings in a way that enables a hearing-impaired employee to participate effectively.

Providing support in the workplace

Assigning an office buddy to someone on the Autism spectrum to explain office culture and norms. Access to Work may agree to pay for ongoing one-to-one support for hearing or vision impaired staff. This might include a British Sign Language Interpreter or a note-taker.

Offering employees relevant recreation and refreshment facilities

Providing a dedicated quiet space for an autistic employee who experiences sensory overload.

Changes to the recruitment process

Modifying procedures for testing or assessment as part of the interview process, such as allowing oral rather than written submission.

5. Who will pay for the changes that I need?

The University will cover the cost for the reasonable adjustments, unless the access is for more specialist support or training. In these instances, Access To Work may provide financial support.

[Scenario 4: I am a member of staff, I have a temporary disability that impacts on my work and I am likely to have increased medical appointments](#)

1. Who do I discuss my situation with?

You should discuss your temporary disability with your line manager, or if this is not possible, your HR Business Partner will be able to advise you.

2. What arrangement will I have to make to attend appointments/treatment?

For information on appointments, please refer to the guidance entitled "*Time off for Health Related Appointments*" which can be found in the "related documents" section of the Managing Absence Policy accessed through the [HR Portal](#).

3. Who and how do I ask for changes to my work space?

You should speak to your line manager about any required changes to your workspace, and they will be able to refer you to Occupational Health, where a full assessment of your needs can be carried out.

4. Can I ask to work flexibly while this situation is ongoing?

As part of their assessment, working flexibly, might be considered as a reasonable adjustment by Occupational Health, to allow for the necessary adjustments to be made to your workspace.

It is also worth noting that you have more than 26 weeks' continuous service, you are able to make a [request for Flexible Working](#), (providing you have not already submitted a request in the last 12 months).

5. Who can I talk to if I don't feel my line manager is supportive?

Please raise your concerns with your HR Business Partner who will be able to advise. You may also wish to discuss the issue with the Disabled Staff Network, should you require peer pastoral support.

[Scenario 5: I am an existing member of staff with an existing disability, however my disability related reasonable adjustments have changed.](#)

1. Who do I discuss my situation with?

Your Line Manager or Human Resources Business Partner will be best placed to assist you with changes to your personal needs.

2. How do I get a new assessment of my needs?

Self-referral assessment requests are not possible, but your Line Manager can refer you to Occupational Health. More information is available [here](#).

3. What reasonable adjustments can be made?

The reasonable adjustments will be different to suit each individual's circumstances.

Examples of the sort of adjustments that may need to be considered, in consultation with an individual, include:

- reallocating work;
- transfer to another post or another place of work;
- making adjustments to buildings;
- being flexible about hours;
- providing training or retraining;
- providing modified equipment;
- making instructions and manuals more accessible;
- providing a reader or interpreter.

4. Who can I talk to if I don't feel my line manager is supportive

If you experience any difficulties with discussing your needs with your line manager, please speak to your HR Business Partner, who will be able to assist you. You may also wish to discuss the issue with the Disabled Staff Network, should you require peer pastoral support.

5. Who will pay for my change of needs?

The University will cover the cost for any reasonable adjustments. Should you require access to more specialist support or training, Access To Work may provide financial support. Additional support with completing any Access to Work application can be provided by the University's Head of Equality and Diversity, Will Cooling.

Appendix A: Examples of Access to Work support for staff

a) Existing employee newly diagnosed with dyslexia

Their difficulties include taking notes, reading lengthy reports and prioritisation. AtW agrees support including:

- Digital voice recorder and TextHelp Read&Write text-to-speech software.
- Half-day training on how to use TextHelp software effectively.
- One day of work-based skills training on prioritisation from a dyslexia specialist

Directorate pays equipment costs (under £1000). AtW pays training costs in full.

b) Existing employee with a chronic back problem for which they have had surgery

AtW agrees support including:

- A custom-designed chair, ergonomic keyboard and accessories;
- Voice recognition software;
- Four half-day sessions of training on voice recognition software;
- Taxis to work during convalescence, while they are unable to use buses.

Directorate pays equipment costs up to £1000 and 20% costs above that. AtW pays 80% equipment costs over £1000 threshold, and all training and taxi costs.

c) A newly appointed employee with a visual impairment

The manager and new employee meet before the individual's start date to discuss support needs. The individual contacts AtW to arrange a support package including assistive software, equipment and an occasional note taker. This support should be in place from the individual's start date.

Since this is a new starter, AtW will meet up to 100% approved costs. AtW agrees a set number of hours per week of note taker support, which the manager and individual can arrange when needed. They recruit a note taker through an approved employment agency.