

Inclusive Recruitment and Reasonable Adjustments in Practice

Removing barriers before they become problems

Who this information sheet is for?

This information sheet is designed for employers, HR teams, managers and recruitment leads who want to make recruitment and onboarding more inclusive for people with SEND.

It focuses on practical changes to systems and processes, rather than individual capability, and supports fair access to work from application through probation.

This sheet can be read on its own or alongside the other SEND information sheets (see overleaf for details).

Why inclusive recruitment matters

Many people with SEND are excluded from employment before they ever start the job.

This is rarely intentional. More often, it is the result of:

- Traditional recruitment processes
- Unexamined assumptions about “the ideal candidate”
- A lack of flexibility in how roles are advertised, assessed and supported

Inclusive recruitment benefits organisations by widening the talent pool and reducing avoidable recruitment and retention issues.

Job descriptions and role clarity

Unclear or overly broad job descriptions can be particularly challenging.

Helpful practice includes:

- Clearly identifying essential vs desirable tasks
- Focusing on what the role actually requires, not how it has always been done
- Avoiding vague terms such as “good communicator” without explanation
- Being explicit about structure, routine and expectations

Clear roles support better matching and reduce the need for later adjustments.

Common barriers in recruitment processes

Standard recruitment practices can unintentionally exclude people with SEND, including:

- Over-long or jargon-heavy job descriptions
- Person specifications that prioritise style over substance
- Time-pressured interviews
- Reliance on verbal communication
- Unclear expectations around “soft skills”

These barriers can prevent capable candidates from demonstrating their strengths.

Interviews and selection processes

Interviews often assess confidence and speed rather than ability.

Inclusive approaches may include:

- Sharing interview questions in advance
- Allowing alternative ways to demonstrate skills
- Reducing time pressure where possible
- Using practical tasks linked to the role
- Being clear about what is being assessed

Fair recruitment is about giving candidates equal opportunity to demonstrate competence, not advantage.

Reasonable adjustments in practice

Reasonable adjustments are changes that remove barriers for individuals with SEND.

Adjustments may be needed:

- During recruitment
- At onboarding
- Throughout probation
- As roles or circumstances change

Examples include:

- Adjustments to communication methods
- Changes to environment or equipment
- Additional structure or clarity
- Flexible approaches to task completion

Adjustments are most effective when they are role-based, not reactive.

Designing role-based adjustment plans that benefit the employee and the organisation

Effective adjustment planning focuses on:

- The demands of the role
- The environment in which the role is carried out
- How tasks are communicated and reviewed

Role-based adjustment plans:

- Reduce reliance on disclosure
- Create consistency
- Support managers to implement adjustments confidently
- Prevent issues escalating into performance concerns

“When recruitment systems are flexible, talent has room to show itself.”

Adjustments are not special treatment

Inclusive recruitment and reasonable adjustments are not about lowering standards.

They are about:

- Removing unnecessary barriers
- Allowing people to perform to their potential
- Creating fair access to employment

Good adjustments improve outcomes for:

- Employees
- Managers
- Teams
- Organisations as a whole

Onboarding and probation periods

The early stages of employment are critical.

People with SEND may need:

- Clear structure and routine
- Written information to refer back to
- Explicit expectations and priorities
- Regular, predictable check-ins

Without this, probation can become a test of coping rather than capability.

Supportive onboarding improves confidence, performance and retention.

Key Messages to take away



Recruitment processes can unintentionally exclude



Clear roles reduce later difficulties



Interviews should assess ability, not confidence alone



Adjustments work best when planned, not reactive



Inclusive recruitment improves retention and performance

Inclusive recruitment is the foundation for effective job design, job carving and long-term success at work.

Next information sheets in this series to explore:

- Job design, job carving and job coaching
- Leadership and organisational culture