



# Supporting candidates and employees with a learning disability

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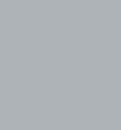
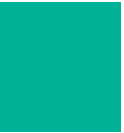


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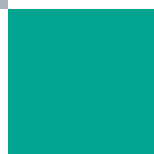
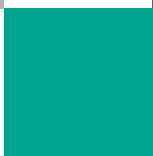
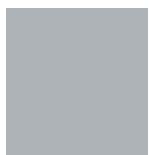
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# Making adjustments – top tips





# Introduction



**This guide aims to give a general introduction to how a learning disability might impact someone at work and provide good practice tips on how to support them.**

Diagnosis and cultural perceptions of learning disabilities vary between countries. Similarly, legal requirements will also differ: in some countries, learning disabilities may not be legally recognised as a disability whereas in other countries, people with a learning disability may be protected by legislation.

Ensuring that you support your candidates and employees with learning disabilities will help you create a more diverse workforce. It's often the case that when a line manager is confident managing a person with a disability or long-term condition, they become more effective managers for all employees.

**Diagnosis and cultural perceptions of learning disabilities vary between countries.**



# Language

## Talking about learning disabilities

Language can be important in creating an open and inclusive workplace for people with learning disabilities (sometimes referred as intellectual disabilities).

Some people may use phrases such as 'suffering from learning disabilities'. In this guide we refer to people, candidates or employees with learning disabilities, taking the viewpoint that people 'live' with their disability or long-term condition and do not always feel that they are 'suffering' from it. It is however recommended to always use the language that the person with learning disabilities uses to describe themselves and to avoid placing 'labels' on employees.

## Talking about disability

In this guide, we use the term 'disabilities' as used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) [1] ratified by over 175 countries. The UN CRPD Article 1 provides a definition for 'persons with disabilities':

**"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."**

In practice, this could include people with a wide range of impairments or conditions such as dyslexia, diabetes or learning disabilities, to name just a few.

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[1] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: [un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)

## **Talking about adjustments**

Adjustments (in some countries referred to as 'accommodations') remove or reduce the effect of the barriers experienced by candidates and employees with disabilities.

Examples of adjustments might include providing a ramp as an alternative to stairs or an electronic version of paper document so that an employee with a visual impairment can use screen reader software to access the information. Working hours and locations can be made flexible and managers can agree different ways to communicate with their employees e.g. over the phone, via email, face-to-face or in writing.

These are small changes that can remove barriers that stop someone from doing their job and can support good performance. In this guide, we refer to these types of changes as 'adjustments'.



## What is a learning disability?

In this document and in the absence of an agreed international definition, we define a learning disability as 'having a reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn new skills'. In some countries this is also known as an 'intellectual disability'.

This reduced ability is described against mainstream intellectual milestones, for example traditional schooling. The impairment will have been present before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development. The cause of many learning disabilities is not known and there may be no visible signs in a person's appearance. Learning disability is an umbrella term that covers a variety of conditions of which Down's syndrome is an example.

A learning disability should not be confused with a mental health condition such as depression or schizophrenia. A mental health condition may be controlled; some are short term and unlike a learning disability they do not usually affect intellectual ability and can be acquired at any time in your life.

'Learning difficulty' or 'neurodiversity' on the other hand, are broader terms that encompasses conditions which do not affect a person's intellectual capacity but which affects the processing of information, for example dyslexia.

**A learning disability should not be confused with a mental health condition such as depression or schizophrenia.**



## **Internal and external sources of help**

There may be sources of help and advice that you can access for detailed information about a learning disability and employment in your country.

Internally, you should speak to your own manager or to your local Human Resources (HR) team about how to access support. Your organisation may also have diversity and inclusion officers or a disability liaison officer you can ask for help and advice on how to support employees with learning disabilities at work.

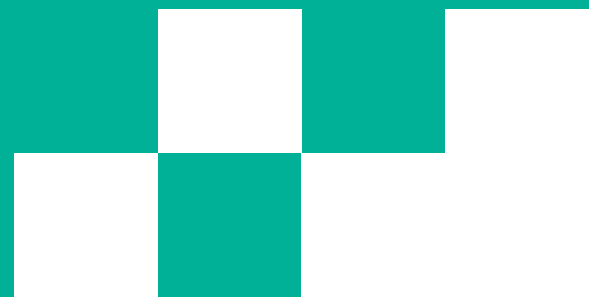
Externally, there may be local organisations that can provide you with expert advice and information about a learning disability in your country. The International Labour Organisation's Global Business and Disability Network's website [2] contains some useful information about local legal requirements and the availability of disability-related support in countries all over the world.

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[2] ILO GBDN website: [businessanddisability.org/country-profiles/](https://businessanddisability.org/country-profiles/)

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11 to 30 are available in the  
full booklet.**

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