



# Supporting employees who stammer

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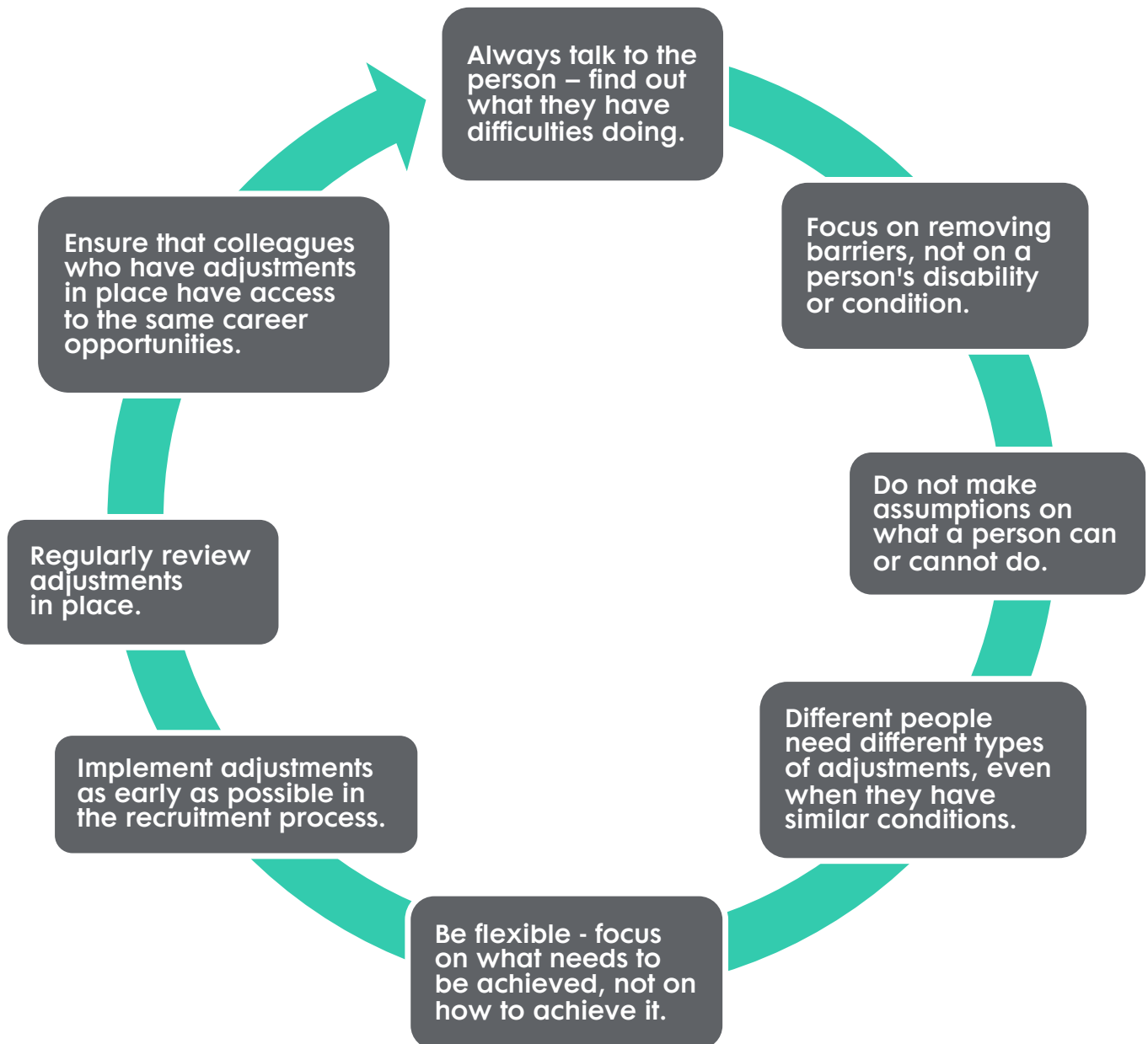


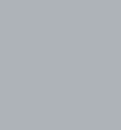
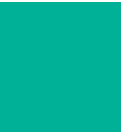


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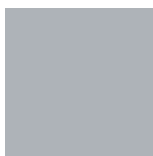
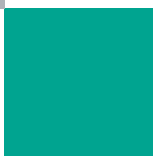
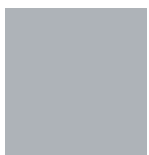
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# Making adjustments – top tips





# Introduction



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

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

Ensuring that you support your candidates and employees who stammer 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.

## **Language**

### **Talking about stammering**

Language can be important in creating an open and inclusive workplace for people who stammer.

In this guide we use the term 'stammering' as it is widely understood. If in doubt, use the language that the individual uses to describe themselves and 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)<sup>[1]</sup> 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, cancer, diabetes or stammering, to name just a few.

## 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'.

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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)

## **What is stammering?**

Stammering is typically recognised by a tense struggle to get words out. This makes it different from the normal non-fluency we all experience which includes hesitations and repetitions. Commonly, stammering involves repeating or prolonging sounds or words, or getting stuck without any sound (silent blocking). Some people put in extra sounds or words and others lose eye contact.

Some people who stammer talk their way around difficult words so that you may not realise they stammer at all. This avoidance of words, and avoidance of speaking in some or many situations, is an important aspect of stammering.

Stammering varies tremendously from person to person and is highly variable for the person who stammers who may be fluent one minute and struggling to speak the next.

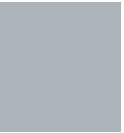
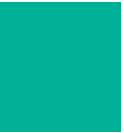
Current research holds that stammering has a physiological basis in the way our brains process speech. This neurological difference only affects speech fluency and has no impact on intelligence, temperament or any cognitive abilities.

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

There may be sources of help and advice that you can access for detailed information about stammering in your country. Internally, you should speak to your own manager or to your local Human Resources (HR) team. Your organisation may also have diversity and inclusion officers or a disability liaison officer you can ask for help and advice.

Externally, there may be local organisations that can provide you with expert advice and information about stammering in your country. The International Labour Organisation's Global Business and Disability Network's website [3] contains some useful information about local requirements and the availability of disability support in countries all over the world.





# Employing people who stammer



## **It is important that employers have open and honest conversations with new employees about the barriers that may be present in the workplace and what simple measures might help.**

As stammering is often misunderstood, people who stammer represent a significant resource in the labour market and their talents are often underutilised at work.

A person who stammers may have difficulties with:

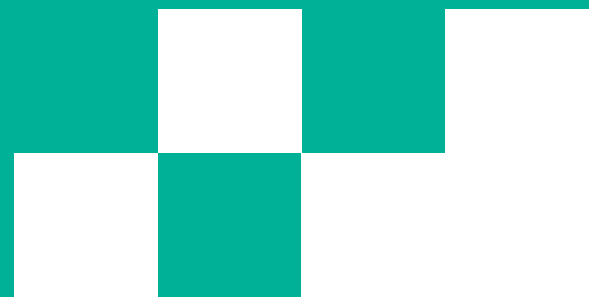
- Interviews (especially telephone interviews).
- Presentations and meetings.
- Tiredness, time pressure or anxiety.
- Using the telephone..

Because they know they will have to try harder with the spoken word, people who stammer are more likely to:

- Plan better what they want to say.
- Think before they speak.

**Content has been removed  
for sample purposes. Pages  
11 to 22 are available in the  
full booklet.**

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