

Supporting People with Disabilities at Work – Reasonable Adjustments

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Growing our
Great Community



Introduction

- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) believes that all staff should be able to thrive and flourish at work. It is a core role of the organisation and managers to support staff to enable them to do this ^[1]
- For a member of staff with a disability and/or a long-term health condition, standard working practices should be reasonably adapted to enable that member of staff to continue to work ^[2]

[1] and [2] Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS (2025). *Reasonable Adjustments for staff with disabilities or long term Conditions*. [Online] Available at: [Reasonable Adjustments for staff with disabilities or long term Conditions – NHSGGC](#) (Accessed 5th August 2025)

This will:

- Enable the staff member to feel appreciated and valued at work ^[1]
- Remove barriers to full participation (to all our staff) ^[2]
- Ensure that we comply with relevant equality legislation ^[3]
- Help us retain staff and reduce sickness absence ^[4]
- Save time spent managing sickness absence, which could be avoided if reasonable adjustments were in place ^[5]

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is a UK law that consolidates and simplifies previous anti-discrimination laws. It protects individuals from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on nine "protected characteristics" in various settings including the workplace, education, and public services ^[1]

Disability is one of the nine protected characteristics ^[2]

[1] and [2] Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018). The purpose of the Equality Act. [Online]. Available at: [Equality Act 2010 | EHRC](#) (Accessed 8th August 2025)

The Equality Act 2010

In essence, the Equality Act 2010 aims to create a fairer society by ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities and is treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their background or characteristics ^[1]

It provides a framework for a more just and equitable society by addressing various forms of discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all ^[2]

[1][2] Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018). The purpose of the Equality Act. [Online]. Available at: [Equality Act 2010 | EHRC](#) (Accessed 8th August 2025)

The Equality Act 2010 – Key Aspects

- Consolidates previous anti-discrimination laws ^[1]
- Protects against discrimination ^[1]
- Promotes equality and inclusion ^[1]
- Applies to various settings ^[1]
- Requires reasonable adjustments for disabled people ^[1]
- Establishes a Public Sector Equality Duty ^[1]

[1] Pyper, D., Uwazuruike, A. (2024). *A short introduction to equality law and policy* (CPB-9448). [Online]. Available at: [CBP-9448.pdf](#) (Accessed 8th August 2025)

Definition of a Disability

- A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities ^[1]
- Employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. (This applies to all workers including trainees, apprentices, contract workers and business partners) ^[2]

[1] Equality Act 2010 [online] *Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 6*. Legislation.gov.uk. Available at: [Equality Act 2010](#) (Accessed 5th August 2025)

[2] UK Government [online] *Reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or health conditions*. UK Government. Available at: [Reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or health conditions - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 5th August 2025)

Statistics

- An estimated 16.1 million people in the UK reported a disability in 2022/23. This represents 24% of the total population ^[1]
 - [Estimates of the number of disabled people in the UK can vary depending on definitions, context and source of information. This includes estimates derived from surveys, which are often highly dependent on the methodology used]
- In Scotland's 2022 Census 1.3 million people stated they lived with a disability which limited their functional activity. This equates to 24% of the population ^[2]

[1] Kirk-Wade, E. Stiebahl, S. Wong, H. (2024). *UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences* (CBP-9602). [Online]. Available at: [CBP-9602.pdf](#) (Accessed 6th August 2025)

[2] National Records of Scotland. (2022). *Scotland's Census 2022 – health, disability and unpaid care*. Edinburgh. National Records of Scotland. [Online]. Available at: [Scotland's Census 2022 - Health, disability and unpaid care | Scotland's Census](#) (Accessed 7th August 2025)

Visible and Non-Visible

In the UK:

- 11% of children are disabled ^[1]
- 23% of working age adults are disabled ^[1]
- 45% of pensionable age adults are disabled ^[1]

Estimated number with non-visible disabilities in Scotland is 11.3 to 12.9 million (or 70-80% of those disabled) ^[2] ^[3]

[1] Scope (2025). *Disability facts and figures*. [Online]. Available at: [Disability facts and figures | Disability charity Scope UK](#) (Accessed 6th August 2025)

[2] National Union of Journalists (2008). Hidden disabilities. [Online]. Available at: [brookes-NUJ-Hidden-disabilities-Report-plus-Lena.pdf](#) (Accessed 8th August 2025)

[3] Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme (2022). Invisible disabilities. [Online]. Available at: [What is the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower?](#) (Accessed 8th August 2025)

Types of Disability

Physical Impairments

conditions affecting mobility, sensory functions (sight, hearing), and other physical abilities ^[1]

Mental / Neurodevelopmental Impairments

covers mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and neurodevelopmental conditions like ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and dyspraxia ^[1]

Progressive Conditions

Conditions like cancer, HIV, and multiple sclerosis are automatically considered disabilities from the time of diagnosis, regardless of the severity of symptoms ^[1]

[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *What disability means by law. A definition of disability*. [Online]. Available at: [Definition of disability - What disability means by law – Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

Types of Disability

Recurring or Fluctuating Conditions

Conditions like arthritis, epilepsy, and some mental health conditions can also be considered disabilities if they have a substantial and long-term effect, even if the effects are not constant ^[1]

Deemed Disabilities

Certain conditions are automatically considered disabilities, such as cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis, and being registered as blind or severely sight impaired ^[2]

[1] Royal College of Nursing (2025). *Discrimination: disability*. [Online]. Available at: [Discrimination: disability | Advice guides | Royal College of Nursing](#) (Accessed 10th August 2025)

[2] Scope (2025). *Your rights under the Equality Act*. [Online]. Available at: [Disability discrimination and the law | Disability charity Scope UK](#) (Accessed 6th August 2025)

Types of Disability

Specific Visual Impairments

Blindness, severe sight impairment, sight impairment, and partial sightedness are automatically considered disabilities when certified by a consultant ophthalmologist ^[1]

Severe Disfigurement

Severe, long-term disfigurements, such as significant facial scarring or skin conditions ^[2]

[1] Sense (2025). *Blindness and visual impairment*. [Online]. <https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/conditions/blindness-and-visual-impairment> Available at: (Accessed 10th August 2025)

[2] Scope (2025). *Your rights under the Equality Act*. [Online]. Available at: [Disability discrimination and the law | Disability charity Scope UK](#) (Accessed 6th August 2025)

Considerations

Substantial and Long-term

Diagnosis

For certain conditions, like cancer, HIV, and multiple sclerosis, the diagnosis itself triggers coverage under the Act ^[1]

Neurodivergence

Conditions like ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and dyspraxia can be considered disabilities under the Equality Act, even if the individual doesn't see themselves as disabled ^[2]

[1] Royal College of Nursing (2025). *Discrimination: disability*. [Online]. Available at: [Discrimination: disability | Advice guides | Royal College of Nursing](#) (Accessed 10th August 2025)

[2] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *What disability means by law. A definition of disability*. [Online]. Available at: [Definition of disability - What disability means by law – Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

Not Covered by the Equality Act

Addiction

Generally, addiction to substances like alcohol or drugs isn't covered under the disability clause unless it has caused an impairment or is related to prescribed medication ^[1]

Genuine Occupational Requirement

Others

- Tattoos and body piercings ^[2]
- Seasonal allergic rhinitis (usually known as hayfever) ^[2]

[1] Citizens Advice (2025). *Check if you're protected from disability discrimination*. [Online]. Available at: [Check if you're protected from disability discrimination - Citizens Advice](#) (Accessed 10th August 2025)

[2] Gov.UK (2023). *Positive action in the workplace*. [Online]. Available at: [Positive action in the workplace - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

Disability Awareness



- Recruitment –
- At pre employment via Occupational Health – health declaration form and fitness form
- Staff member discloses information whilst contractually in employment
- Managers can use available opportunities to ask the staff whether they need any adjustments - return to work discussions, one to one meetings, appraisals

Legal Position

- In employment law, the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees or job applicants arises when the employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that the individual has a disability and is likely to be at a substantial disadvantage in the workplace without the adjustments ^[1]
- This means an employer can't simply ignore potential disabilities or refuse to investigate if there are signs that an employee might be disabled ^[1]

[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *Supporting disabled people at work. What employers should do.* [Online]. Available at: [What employers should do - Supporting disabled people at work - Acas](#). (Accessed 12th August 2025)

Employers must make reasonable adjustments when:

- they know, or could reasonably be expected to know, someone is disabled ^[1]
- a disabled staff member or job applicant asks for adjustments ^[1]
- someone who is disabled is having difficulty with any part of their job ^[1]
- someone's absence record, sickness record or delay in returning to work is because of, or linked to, their disability ^[1]

[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *Supporting disabled people at work. What employers should do.* [Online]. Available at: [What employers should do - Supporting disabled people at work - Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

What is Reasonable?

Reasonable = fair, practical and sensible ^[1]

Various factors influence this. Things to consider:

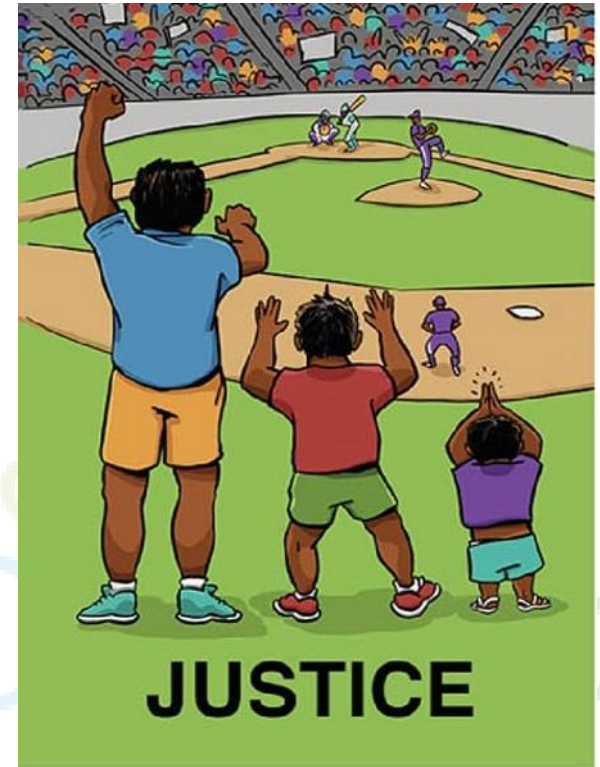
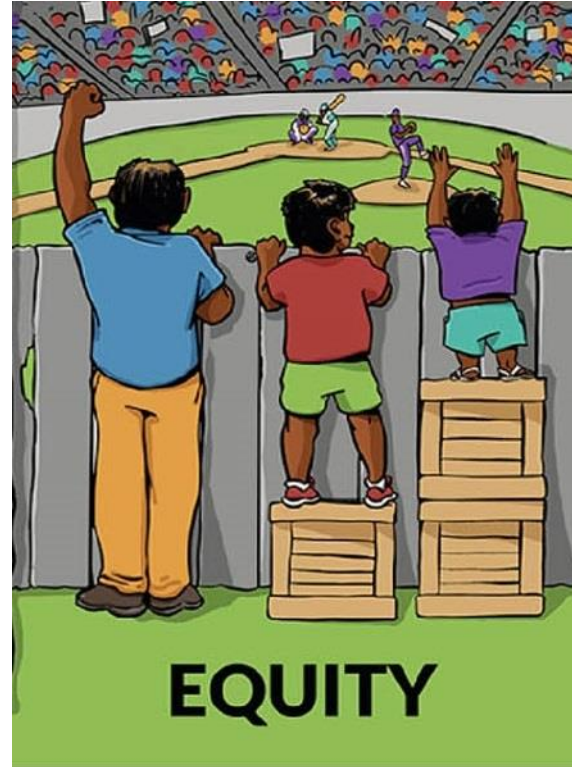
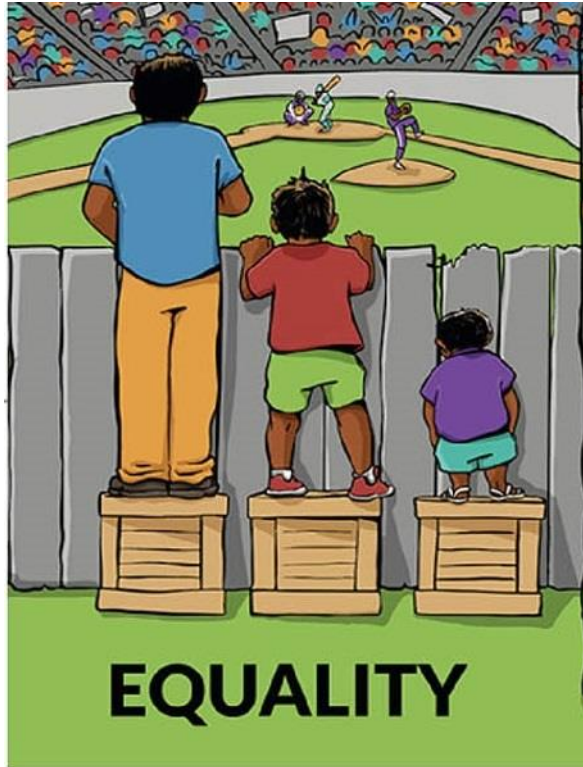
- How effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage
- Practicality
- The cost
- The organisation's resources and size
- The availability of financial support

[1] Oxford University (2010). Oxford Dictionary of English. Oxford University Press

Reasonable Adjustments

Putting in place a reasonable adjustment can mean that a member of staff is treated differently from their colleagues. This is perfectly reasonable and is required by law. This is the difference between treating team members equally and equitably ^[1]

^[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *Reasonable adjustments at work. What reasonable adjustments are.* [Online]. Available at: [What reasonable adjustments are - Reasonable adjustments at work - Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)



Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability ^[1]

These may include

- making changes to the workplace
- changing someone's working arrangements
- finding a different way to do something
- providing equipment, services or support

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. They can be for physical or mental health conditions. They can cover any area of work ^[1]

[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). Reasonable adjustments at work. What reasonable adjustments are. [Online]. Available at: [What reasonable adjustments are - Reasonable adjustments at work - Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

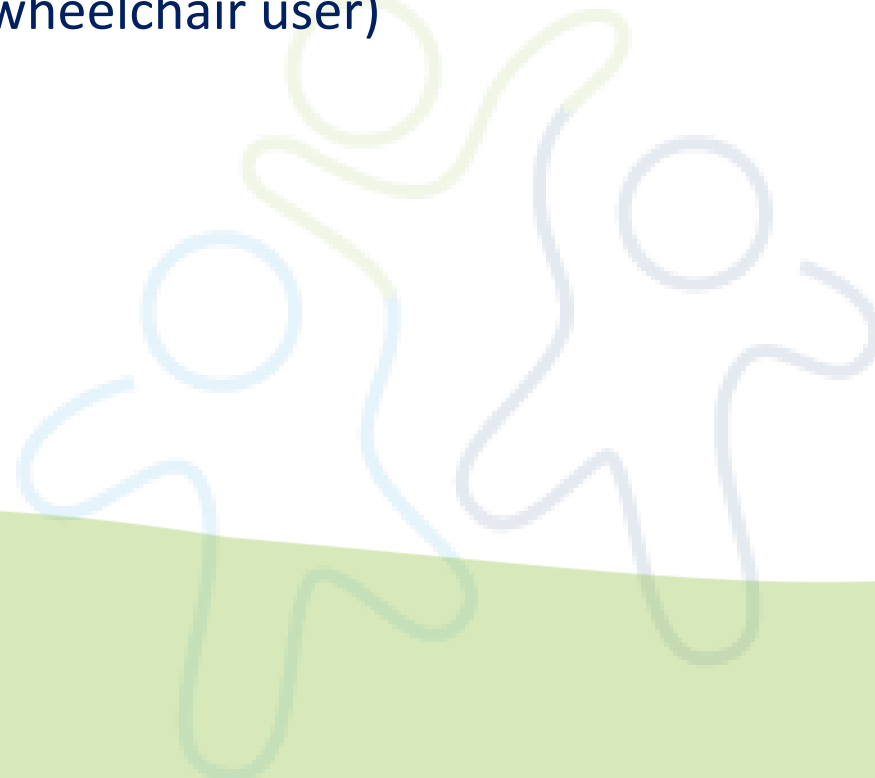
Reasonable Adjustments - Examples

Changes to the workplace or working environment

- Adjustment to lighting
- Changing layout
- Accessible parking space
- Accessible room (for example for a wheelchair user)

Changes to working arrangements

- Change in work pattern
- More frequent or additional breaks
- Flexible working
- Home or hybrid working
- Phased return



Reasonable Adjustments - Examples

Finding a different way to do something

- Distributing work differently within the team
- Alternative work duties or offering another suitable role
- Giving someone more time to do tasks

Providing equipment, services or support

- Providing additional or adapted equipment - chairs, computer software, phones
- Providing information in an accessible format
- Providing one-to-one support or supervision
- Providing other specialist support e.g. sign language interpreter

Reasonable Adjustments

- The nature of adjustments required will depend on the individuals needs ^[1]
- Some people might not need or want adjustments, although this might change over time ^[2]
- Important to communicate with the staff member and explore any barriers at work to better understand these and to consider what adjustments would be beneficial

[1] NHS Scotland (2024). *Guide to reasonable adjustments*. [Online]. Available at: [nhsscotland-workforce-policies-guide-to-reasonable-adjustments-1-2-last-updated-august-2025.pdf](https://www.nhs.uk/scotland/workforce/policies-guide-to-reasonable-adjustments-1-2-last-updated-august-2025.pdf) (Accessed on 12th August 2025)

[2] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). Reasonable adjustments at work. What reasonable adjustments are. [Online]. Available at: [What reasonable adjustments are - Reasonable adjustments at work - Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk/what-reasonable-adjustments-are-reasonable-adjustments-at-work) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

Neurodivergence

- Neurodivergence refers to the natural variations in how individual brains function, learn, and behave, which differ from what is considered typical or "neurotypical" ^[1]
- It encompasses a wide range of conditions, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia, where individuals experience and process information differently ^[1]
- Neurodivergence is not a disorder to be cured, but rather a natural part of human diversity ^[1]

[1] Royal College of Nursing (2025). *What is neurodiversity?* [Online]. Available at: [What is neurodiversity? | Neurodiversity RCN | Peer Support Service | Royal College of Nursing](#) (Accessed on 12th August 2025)

Neurodivergence – Adjustments

The following adjustments are supported by evaluative evidence ^[1]^[2]:

- Assistive technology
- Flexible hours and remote working
- Environmental flexibility
- Coaching

[1] Doyle, N. Medhurst, B., Kinman, G., McDowall, A. (2022). *Evaluating and supporting neurodifferences at work* [Online]. Available at: [Evaluating and supporting Neurodifferences at work | The Society of Occupational Medicine](#) (Accessed on 10th August 2025)

[2] Doyle, N. Neurodiversity at work (2017). In: BPS, ed. *Psychology at work: Improving wellbeing and productivity in the workplace*. Leicester: British Psychological Society; 2017. pp.44-62.

Neurodivergence – Adjustments

- The National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) is a Scottish Government-funded group of professionals based at Queen Margaret University
- NAIT's work focuses on supporting the implementation of evidence-based practices for autistic individuals across their lifespan, within a [neurodiversity paradigm](#)
- The team includes experts from various fields like education, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and psychiatry

- [1] Third Space (2025). National Autism Implementation Team. [Online]. Available at: [NAIT | ThirdSpace](#) (Accessed: 12th August)

Neurodivergence – Adjustments

Table 2 - Suggested adjustments for environment

	Possible adjustments	Identified adjustments
Light	• Turn off or turn down artificial lights	
	• Remove flickering or oscillating environmental features	
	• Avoid highly stimulating décor	
	• Use of sunglasses	
Noise	• Consider environmental sounds, reduce background noise	
	• Avoid having conversations in noisy environments	
	• Use noise-cancelling headphones and/or ear plugs	
Smell	• Colleagues avoid wearing perfume, highly scented cosmetics, or toiletries	
	• Avoid aerosols or chemical air fresheners	
	• Avoid highly scented cleaning products	
	• Consider ventilation, open windows where possible	
Temperature	• Consider environmental temperature	
	• Adjust temperature to suit individual needs	

Reasonable Adjustment Guidance and Workplace Adjustment Passport

- The [NHS GGC Reasonable Adjustment Guidance](#) and [NHS Scotland Guide to Reasonable Adjustments](#) are helpful guides providing people managers with background and examples of Reasonable Adjustments, where to get support and identify resources if required
- This NHS GGC guide has been developed in partnership and with the input of members of the Staff Disability Forum to ensure the lived experience of staff with disabilities has informed this guide
- This is accompanied by the Workplace Adjustment Passport and Reasonable Adjustment Review Form, which should be used by staff and managers to record any agreed adjustments

Supporting Employees

- Managers should seek to have conversations as early as possible with their staff member
- It is important that these discussions are handled sensitively and consider wider wellbeing support e.g. specialist support via Occupational Health
- Listening to the needs of the member of staff is key
- Staff members are encouraged to discuss with their manager any requirement for reasonable adjustments to assist in the implementation of adjustments ^[1]

[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *Reasonable adjustments at work. Making and handling requests.* [Online]. Available at: [Making and handling requests - Reasonable adjustments at work - Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

Supporting Employees

- An employer does not have to make adjustments that are unreasonable. However, they should still find other ways to support the disabled person. This could include making other adjustments that are reasonable ^[1]
- The overall aim should be, as far as possible, to remove or reduce any disadvantage faced by a disabled worker ^[2]

[1] Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (2025). *Reasonable adjustments at work. Making and handling requests*. [Online]. Available at: [Making and handling requests - Reasonable adjustments at work - Acas](#) (Accessed 12th August 2025)

[2] UK Government (2025) *Employing disabled people and people with health conditions*. [Online]. Available at: [Employing disabled people and people with health conditions - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 13th August 2025)

Case Study

- The employee was referred to Occupational Health as a Management referral due to performance and capability issues as a newly qualified Staff Nurse
- The employee had difficulty with focussing on tasks and appeared to be anxious. During the Occupational Health consultation the employee indicated that when they were university they had been diagnosed as having ADHD and had been supported with written work assignments and placements as a student. As this was their first qualified Nurse post they did not know if they needed any adjustments
- As a newly qualified Staff Nurse they had a Preceptor (mentor) who was already providing one to one support to become familiar with the ward and processes to be followed. The Staff Nurse identified that they were developing a good bond with their Preceptor, and would be happy for a workplace adjustments passport to be completed and shared with the Preceptor and the Senior Nursing team
- Issues identified by the Staff Nurse was that they found the ward environment busy and distracting and had difficulty remembering processes and anxious that they appeared to be not coping
- We discussed the Scottish ADHD coalition Guide to ADHD (www.scottishadhdcoalition.org) in the workplace and used this to identify specific issues and solutions that the Staff Nurse may find useful

Case Study

Adjustments suggested:

- Increased meetings with the mentor, initially daily to supervise work and plan the daily tasks
- To work with the Preceptor as buddy rather than ad hoc catch ups
- To use a quiet office to complete her written work, care planning and prepare check list for tasks/ processes
- There was already SOP (standard operating processes) but the Staff Nurse identified they were too much information on them and these caused them difficulty. They realised if they made bullet points they could follow processes easier
- During rounds/ meetings, use a note taking app on their works phone
- Once they became familiar with the ward routine they did not require as much feedback but continued to have meeting with the mentor so any difficulty was identified as soon as possible

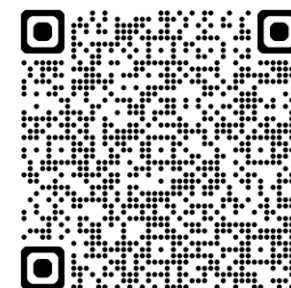
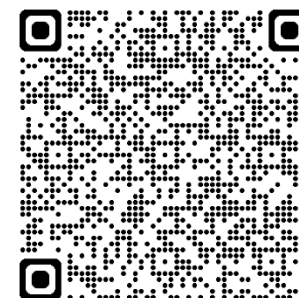
Support and Advice

- **Occupational Health**
ggc.occupational.health@nhs.scot
- **The HR Support & Advice Unit**
- **The Staff Disability Forum**
- **Staff side representatives/Trade Unions**
- **Reasonable Adjustment Guidance and Workplace Adjustment Passport**

Support and Advice

- **Access to Work** - government scheme that can help people with a physical or mental health condition or disability to get or stay in work. <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- **Specialist support services and networks**
 - **Scottish Autism** - [Scottish Autism - Autism Awareness Charity & Services for Children & Adults in Scotland](#)
 - **MIND** – [We're Mind, the mental health charity | Mind](#)
 - **National Autistic Society** - [National Autistic Society](#)
 - **MacMillan Cancer Support** - [Macmillan Cancer Support | The UK's leading cancer care charity](#)
- **National Autism Implementation Team NAIT** - [NAIT | ThirdSpace](#)

- [Workplace Adjustment Passport – NHSGGC](https://www.nhsggc.scot/staff-recruitment/hrconnect/growing-our-great-community-through-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/reasonable-adjustments/)
<https://www.nhsggc.scot/staff-recruitment/hrconnect/growing-our-great-community-through-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/reasonable-adjustments/>
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – NHSGGC](#)



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Thank you