

# BSBXDB501

# Support staff members with disability in the workplace

Release 1

BSB Training Package  
Release 4.0 Inclusion of People  
with Disability in VET Cross Sector

Learner guide

**BSBXDB501**

# **Support staff members with disability in the workplace**

Release 1

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Aspire Version 1.1

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## Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBXDB501 Support staff members with disability in the workplace*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au).

## How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Icon	Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
	Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.</li> </ul>
	Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These highlight key learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.</li> </ul>
	Practice tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.</li> </ul>
	Summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.</li> </ul>
	Learning checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.</li> </ul>

## Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accesses, reads and interprets detailed information related to resources and supports available</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and maintains workplace documentation accurately and in response to required needs</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discusses and seeks information using appropriate structure and language for the particular audience</li> <li>• Uses questions and responses to clarify or confirm understanding</li> <li>• Uses appropriate communication techniques to build rapport, trust and provide guidance and feedback</li> </ul>
Navigate the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises and follows legislative requirements, organisational protocols, policies and procedures relevant to own role</li> </ul>
Interact with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperates and consults with others to clarify understanding, achieve joint outcomes and seek feedback</li> </ul>
Get the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses problem-solving skills to identify and analyse issues or barriers, consider options and develop responses and opportunities for improvement</li> <li>• Organises and completes work according to defined requirements, taking responsibility for decisions and sequencing tasks to achieve efficient outcomes</li> </ul>

## What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Promoting disability support	1A Promoting the rights and needs of people with disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Support strategies and adjustments	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Providing information to staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Planning the implementation of support needs with staff	2A Consulting with staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Establishing goals and expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3: Implementing support needs for staff	3A Workplace arrangements to provide support	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Monitoring the effectiveness of supports	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



## Topic 1

# Promoting disability support

*An environment free of discrimination means staff can work to their full potential.*

As a manager, you need to provide the necessary support and eliminate the barriers some staff face in fulfilling the requirements of their job. You must ensure the rights of all staff are protected, including those with disabilities.

In this topic you will learn about:

- 1A Promoting the rights and needs of people with disability
- 1B Support strategies and adjustments
- 1C Providing information to staff

# 1A

## Promoting the rights and needs of people with disability

*According to the Australian Network on Disability, a disability is any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility functions.*

It may be caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease.

A disability may be:

- temporary or permanent
- total or partial
- lifelong or acquired
- visible or invisible.

Research conducted by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Business School found that complaints about disability discrimination in the workplace revolve around some key themes:

- Employers incorrectly assume the costs of employing staff with disability are higher.
- Strict adherence to guidelines and policies results in discrimination.
- Employers don't provide adequate access to the workplace.
- Biased hiring practices discount the abilities of applicants with disability.
- Managers and HR personnel are quick to dismiss employees who acquire a disability.
- Workplaces don't provide assistive technologies such as hearing loops or screen reading software.



**Source:** Simon Darcy, Tracy Taylor & Jenny Green (2016), 'But I can do the job: Examining disability employment practice through human rights complain cases', *Disability & Society*, 31:9, 1242-1274: <https://www.tandfonline.com>

## Disability Discrimination Act

*The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (DDA) recognises that people with disability must be treated equally before the law.*

The DDA defines disability as:

- total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions
- total or partial loss of part of the body
- the presence in the body of organisms causing or capable of causing disease or illness
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of part of the person's body
- a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment, or that results in disturbed behaviour.

It includes a disability that:

- presently exists
- previously existed but no longer exists
- may exist in the future (such as having a genetic predisposition to that disability)
- is imputed or attributed to a person.

The DDA aims to ensure that people with disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community, including right to equality before the law.

The following provides descriptions of key terms from the DDA that affects both employers and employees in a workplace.

Term	Description
<b>Direct discrimination</b>	It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of the person's disability. A person with a disability cannot be treated less favourably than a person without a disability would be treated in the same circumstances.
<b>Indirect discrimination</b>	Indirect discrimination occurs when there is an unreasonable rule or policy that is the same for everyone, but has an unfair effect on people who share a particular attribute such as a disability. For example, if the only way to enter a public building is by a set of stairs, this indirectly discriminates against people who use wheelchairs as they would be unable to enter the building.
<b>Unjustifiable hardship</b>	Employers are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to help a person with a disability carry out the inherent requirements of the job. The DDA provides an exception if the cost or difficulties of providing facilities will place an unjustifiable hardship on a person or organisation. For example, if the cost to modify the building to make it wheelchair accessible is beyond the financial means of the owner, this would be unjustifiable hardship.
<b>Inherent requirements</b>	<p>The requirements of a job will vary depending on what the job is. These requirements may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to perform tasks which are essential to perform a job productively and to the required quality</li> <li>• the ability to work effectively in a team or with other organisations</li> <li>• the ability to work safely.</li> </ul> <p>People with disabilities must be assessed on their current ability to do the job. This assessment must not include assumptions about how their disability may have affected them in the past or may affect them in the future. If a person with a disability cannot perform the inherent requirements of a job because of the disability, the employer must consider how the person could be provided with reasonable adjustments to help them do the job.</p>

## Example

## Direct and indirect discrimination

Here are three examples of different types of discrimination in the workplace.

**Example 1**

Amanda has just found out that she is paid less than other workers. Amanda has a physical disability that prevents her from doing heavy physical work. When she queries her boss, he says that she is paid less because her productivity isn't as good as other staff and she is restricted in the range of tasks she can do. This is an example of direct discrimination, where Amanda's disability is the reason she is being treated unfairly by her employer.

**Example 2**

A company changes its work practices to require all staff to work 12-hour shifts. Maria, who has type 2 diabetes, is unable to meet the demands of the longer shift and resigns. This is an example of indirect discrimination as she was disadvantaged in being asked to work a longer shift.

**Example 3**

Dinesh breaks his arm while skiing and has trouble returning to his job. He needs to take time off for medical appointments and he can only carry out light tasks at work. Dinesh's boss tells him that he'll have to take unpaid leave until his arm is mended and he can return to work fully.

This is an example of direct discrimination. The employer should be looking at making reasonable adjustments in the workplace to allow Dinesh to continue working.

## Reasonable adjustment

*At the heart of reasonable adjustment is the notion of flexible workplaces free of barriers.*

The idea behind reasonable adjustment is that some people with disability are only able to participate at work if alterations are made to the workplace. Although current and prospective staff are not legally obligated to mention their disability to an employer, doing so can allow for reasonable adjustments to be made to support them.

Employers who are aware of a person's disability can be required by law to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace. In some cases, failure to make changes can be a form of discrimination.

Many people with disability will not require any workplace adjustments. Some may need minor adjustments, such as changes to their work hours or the performance requirements of the job. Other staff with disability may require specific equipment or structural changes to be able to work safely and effectively in the workplace. The Human Rights Commission provides examples of reasonable adjustments that can be made.



**Reasonable adjustments include:**

- reviewing and adjusting the performance requirements of the job
- flexible work hours
- providing telephone typewriter (TTY) phone access for staff members with hearing or speech impairments
- purchasing screen-reading software for staff members with vision impairment
- approving more regular breaks for people with chronic pain or fatigue
- buying desks with adjustable heights for people using wheelchairs.

## Unjustifiable hardship

***Employers are not required to make adjustments to their workplace if they can prove that it would cause unjustifiable hardship.***

An employer does not need to make an adjustment where they can prove that they comply with a disability standard under the DDA, or where they have been granted an exemption under that standard.

For example, the adjustment may be too expensive, too difficult or too time-consuming to implement. Additionally, an employer may be able to prove that:

- the adjustments are not reasonable
- the person with the disability could not perform the genuine and reasonable requirements of the job even if the adjustments were made.

The nature of an organisation's work, its size and resource base are all factors in determining whether certain adjustments are reasonable. Larger organisations are more likely to have the resources and capacity to make adjustments to accommodate staff with disability.

Many adjustments or modifications involve the application of good human resources practice that would be incorporated for any new employee.

You can read about reasonable adjustments here: <http://aspirelr.link/reasonable-adjustments-in-employment>.

## Anti-discrimination legislation

***Anti-discrimination legislation makes it illegal to discriminate against a person due to disability.***

Under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Cth), employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for a person with disability who requires the adjustments in order to participate in the recruitment process or perform the genuine and reasonable requirements of the job.

In addition, each state and territory has its own anti-discrimination laws that came into effect around the same time federal legislation was introduced. Each of these laws contains specific references to people with disability.

### State and territory anti-discrimination legislation

- *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* (NT)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (Tas)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) and *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA)

## Disability Services Act

*The Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth) provides a comprehensive framework for the funding and provision of support services for people with disability.*

It provides for:

- accrediting and certifying services and programs
- grants for eligible services and research development activities
- grants for employment services, such as the Employment Assistance Fund
- disability standards reviews
- rehabilitation services.

Many of the states and territories have their own legislation that defines the function of the Disability Services Commission and Disability Services Commissioner.

## Fair Work Act

*Employee/employer relationships in Australia are governed by the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) and the Fair Work Regulations.*

They provide a safety net of minimum entitlements, enable flexible working arrangements and fairness at work, and prevent discrimination against employees.

Section 351 of the Fair Work Act states:

‘An employer must not take adverse action against a person who is an employee, or prospective employee, of the employer because of the person’s race, colour, sex, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family or carer’s responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.’

An adverse action is any of the following:

- dismissing an employee
- injuring an employee in their employment
- altering an employee’s position to their detriment
- discriminating between one employee and other employees
- refusing to employ a prospective employee
- discriminating against a prospective employee on the terms and conditions in the offer of employment.

The Fair Work Act makes specific reference to federal and state/territory anti-discrimination legislation.

## National Disability Strategy

*In 2009 state and federal governments came together to draft the National Disability Strategy (NDS).*

The governments committed to a national approach to supporting people with disability to maximise their potential in order to participate as equal citizens. The NDS focuses on achieving a society that is inclusive and enabling, providing each person with equality and the opportunity to reach their full potential. The NDS is underpinned by the principles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

One of the key actions to come out of the NDS is the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS provides support to eligible people with intellectual, physical, sensory, cognitive or psychosocial disability. It also funds a range of supports and services, which include employment aimed at helping participants to increase community and workplace participation.

**The NDS 2010–2020 is a 10-year national plan with six priority areas:**

- Inclusive and accessible communities
- Rights, protection, justice and legislation
- Economic security
- Personal and community support
- Learning and skills
- Health and wellbeing

Source: Council of Australian Governments, 2010-2020 National Disability Strategy: <https://dss.gov.au>

You can read more about the National Disability Strategy (NDS) here: <http://aspirelr.link/nds-2010-2020>.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

*Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP), which came in to force in March 2008.*

Australia joined other countries in a global effort to promote the equal and active participation of all people with disability.

There are eight guiding principles that underpin the CRDP and each one of its specific articles:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy (including the freedom to make one's own choices) and independence of persons
2. Non-discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality between men and women
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities



## Practice task 1

### Question 1

Which of the following statements relating to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) are correct? Select all that apply.

- The DDA aims to eliminate discrimination against a person with a disability in several areas, including employment.
- A disability can be a total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions.
- A disability is a medical condition where the impairment stops the person from participating in society.
- People with disability have the same rights to equality as the rest of the community.
- A disability is something that must be fixed or cured.
- A disabled person cannot be discriminated against when accessing or being provided with goods and services.

## Question 2

Which of the following statements in relation to the DDA are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- |   |       |      |
|---|-------|------|
| a) The employer must make it clear to job applicants what the essential duties of the job are.  | * Yes | * No |
| b) People with disability must be assessed on the basis of what a person without disability could do.   | * Yes | * No |
| c) If a person with disability cannot perform the inherent requirements of a job, they should not be considered for the job.  | * Yes | * No |
| d) An employer can raise the standard to which tasks may be completed to exclude potential applicants with disability.  | * Yes | * No |
| e) An employer can lawfully decide not to make requested adjustments if the person with the disability could not perform the job even if the adjustments were made. | * Yes | * No |

## Question 3

Match each instrument for promoting the needs and rights of people with disability on the left to the description on the right.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| * National Disability Strategy   | * A framework for the funding and provision of support services for people with disabilities, such as accrediting and certifying services and programs and reviewing the Disability Standards.                           |
| * United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | * A set of entitlements that enables flexible working arrangements and fairness at work and prevents discrimination against employees, such as refusing to employ a prospective employee because they have a disability. |
| * Disability Services Act  | * A global effort to promote the equal and active participation of all people with disability, such as respecting differences and accepting people with disabilities as part of humanity.                                |
| * Fair Work Act  | * A national approach to supporting people with disability to participate as equal citizens, such as providing the opportunity for each person to reach their potential.   |

## 1B

## Support strategies and adjustments

*Support strategies and adjustments should be tailored for each staff member.*

Many people with disability encounter barriers and difficulties in the workplace. Commonly experienced challenges include:

- Access – Physical access to buildings, workspaces, amenities and the ease with which someone can move around the workspace
- Transport – Getting to and from work or accessing work-related transport
- Flexibility of work hours – The degree to which workplaces are willing to accommodate flexible start and finish times and days
- Flexibility of work tasks – The degree to which work tasks can be managed or altered to accommodate cognitive and physical disability
- Supports and resources – The availability and cost of support strategies, such as modifications and the time taken to implement them in the workplace



## Communication methods

*A fundamental requirement in any workplace is the need for effective communication.*

Providing the supports and resources to enable communication for people with disability will lead to more inclusive practices and greater participation in the workplace.

Communication methods can be adjusted to meet the individual capabilities and preferences of the person. Everyone has different communication needs depending on factors such as their age, first language, education level, physical and mental ability.

### Factors that can affect communication

- The ability of someone to understand, including cognitive ability, application of logic, linking ideas, etc.
- Memory – both short- and long-term
- Speech, including problems with pronunciation, speech patterns, stammers, etc.
- Hearing impairment
- The ability to form ideas and opinions
- Language memory and word formation, such as an inability to form or remember words
- The rate at which someone can express themselves and communicate
- The rate at which someone can process information and formulate a response
- The capacity of someone to listen in group settings or with background noise or distractions
- Social confidence and competence
- The ability to understand and respond to social cues – taking turns, recognising pauses, recognising when someone has finished speaking, etc.

## Communicating with people with disability

*The aim of communication is the same for everyone – with or without disability.*

According to the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program, people without disability can feel uncomfortable talking to someone with disability. This can be for a range of reasons, including:

- They are unsure what the correct terminology to use is when speaking about or to a person with disability.
- They are fearful of offending someone and saying the wrong thing.
- They are unsure of the best way to communicate with someone.
- They have had a previous uncomfortable experience, or no previous experience communicating with a person with a disability.



### Communication tips

- See the person, not the disability – Recognise that a person with a disability doesn't want to be considered different.
- Always speak directly to the person with a disability, even if they are with a carer or interpreter.
- Speak to adults as adults (not as children).
- Don't make assumptions about a person's disability; for example, don't assume a person using a wheelchair is paralysed.
- Don't make assumptions about what a person with disability can or can't do.
- Don't assume a person with a physical disability also has an intellectual disability.
- Ask before you help and respect a person's right to refuse your help.
- Take the time to listen to people with disability. If you can't understand what a person is saying, don't pretend to – just ask them to repeat themselves.
- If at any time you're not sure how best to communicate, ask the person what would work for them.

**Adapted from:** National Disability Coordination Officer Program, 'Communicating effectively with people with disabilities': <https://www.education.gov.au/national-disability-coordination-officer-programme>

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) provides the following tips on communicating with people in a face-to-face situation.

Type of disability	Tips when communicating
<b>Physical disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that someone's personal space can include their wheelchair and crutches.</li> <li>• Don't touch or push a person's wheelchair, and don't move their crutches or walking stick without their permission.</li> <li>• When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair, try to find something to sit on to be at eye level with them.</li> </ul>
<b>Vision impairment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always address the person by name (if you know it) and introduce yourself.</li> <li>• When you enter or leave a room, say something to make sure that the person won't be embarrassed by speaking to an empty space.</li> </ul>
<b>Hearing impairment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain the person's attention before speaking. Try a gentle tap on the shoulder, a wave or some other visual signal to get the person's attention.</li> <li>• Face the person directly and maintain eye contact.</li> <li>• Make sure your mouth is visible – don't cover it with your hand or any other object as you talk.</li> <li>• Don't exaggerate your mouth movements – this will only make it more difficult to lip-read.</li> <li>• Use short sentences.</li> <li>• Keep your volume at a natural level – don't shout.</li> </ul>
<b>Intellectual disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an environment free from distraction.</li> <li>• Make sure you have the person's attention before you start talking. Use their name and make eye contact.</li> <li>• Keep your questions simple and your answers easy to understand.</li> <li>• Remember that your body language is important because people with an intellectual disability often rely on visual cues and facial expressions such as smiling.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental illness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be respectful to the person. Explain they are in control and confirm they are comfortable communicating</li> <li>• Reassure them that they can stop or have a break at any time.</li> <li>• Speak in a relaxed and calm manner.</li> <li>• Communicate in a straightforward manner and stick to one topic at a time.</li> </ul>

**Adapted from:** Australian Federation of Disability Organisations; 'Communication with people with disabilities': <https://www.afdo.org.au>

## Augmentative and alternative communication

*Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to communication strategies or techniques for people who have difficulty communicating.*

AAC can provide:

- a means of independent communication
- participation in a variety of environments
- autonomy, choice and self-determination
- increased quality of life.

The most appropriate methods to communicate will depend on:

- the requirements of the person with disability
- the training and skills of the staff employed at the organisation
- the service context, such as whether the communication needs to occur over the phone, face to face or via email
- the purpose of the communication, such as to obtain information.



AAC can be categorised as either aided or unaided.

### Unaided AAC

Techniques that do not require the use of an external aid.

This includes eye contact, facial expressions, body language, gestures and manual signing.

### Aided AAC

External items used to aid communication (referred to as high or low technology):

- Low technology includes objects such as a pen and paper, pictures and communication books.
- High technology includes a tablet, smartphone app or a speech-generating device that uses software and accessories to aid communication.

The person with disability can provide advice on the most appropriate and suitable AAC required for them. Many people with disabilities own equipment and understand how to use it. A lack of training or expertise among staff can be a major barrier for communication.

## Communication symbols

*The complexity of a person's communication needs will determine how they are able to communicate.*

Some people have more complex communication needs and are unable to speak. This includes people with an acquired brain injury (ABI), cognitive impairment or speech difficulty. Instead of using spoken words, they may use symbols that represent meanings.

Here are examples of communication symbols.

### Photos

Photos are used to represent meaning. They may represent items a person wants or likes, friends and relatives, or may have personal meaning. They can be used in chat books, activity boards and other communication aids.

### Pictures

Pictures are used to represent objects or items a person wishes to communicate about. A widely used system is the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). It allows a person to use pictures to express their needs. PECS is divided into structured phases that progress from requesting specific items to constructing sentences.

### Icons

Minspeak is a visual language designed for use in augmentative communication, and uses icons as symbols instead of relying on the written word. The person using Minspeak can independently communicate a large vocabulary with a small number of icons. This means the person doesn't have to spell, or learn or navigate a large set of pictures.

For more information go to: <http://aspirelr.link/minspeak>.

### Pictographs

Pictorial aids are a type of assistive technology that do not rely on reading, hearing or speaking words. Because of this, pictographs do not require any level of literacy. They include a set of clear and easily understood drawings that allow someone to convey information.

A communication board allows someone to use a combination of communication symbols to express their needs and feelings. It includes frequently used letters, words or pictures the person can point or gesture to. These are ordered in a systematic way; for example, they may be grouped according to activities, foods or letters of the alphabet.

The examples of non-electronic (low technology) AACs below are provided by Scope Australia.

#### **Frenchay Alphabet Board (FAB)**

FAB is used by people with literacy skills who can type out their message.

#### **E-Tran Board**

This is a non-electronic alphabet board for people who need to use eye-pointing devices for communication. The letters are grouped in each quadrant and the user indicates the quadrant that the letter is in followed by the colour of the letter. This system requires the person to have good encoding and literacy skills.

#### **ICU Communicator**

This was developed by speech pathologists at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne. It contains pictures, words and phrases suitable for a hospital setting.

#### **Vidatak EZ Communication boards**

These boards are designed with vocabulary focused on healthcare topics. They are available in either word or picture formats and in 17 different languages.

## **Electronic aids**

*Devices and technology can support people of all abilities to communicate.*

Apps for devices such as smartphones and tablets provide a range of accessibility features, including:

- vibration, spoken and audible feedback
- virtual buttons to navigate a device without having to touch it
- voice-operated interfaces
- camera feature that narrates what is happening in the environment surrounding the person
- listening and translating what has been said into text
- colour or light identifiers
- automated actions such as reading text messages out loud.

There are phone systems for people who have a speech or hearing impairment. This includes the Telephone Typewriter (TTY), an electronic device that sends a text over the phone line through the National Relay Service.

High-technology aids vary in cost and size. In many cases they can be mounted on a wheelchair. They include the following devices.

**Voice amplifiers**

These are used by people with quiet voices to amplify their voice.

**Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs)**

Also called speech-generating devices (SGDs), these produce speech in a synthesised voice based on typed words. They can be used to supplement or replace speech.

**Eye gaze devices**

These devices use eye movement and blinking as a method to select letters, which are displayed on a screen.

## Using plain English

*Plain English helps to make communication easier.*

Plain English means presenting information that is clear to the reader or listener. It started as a movement some decades ago to improve the readability of documents produced in the public sector (government departments).

When communicating with another person, ask yourself:

- How familiar are they with the words you are using?
- What can you assume they understand?
- What background information or context do they need to make sense of what you say?
- What details do you need to explain?

When writing or talking using plain English, make sure you:

- use everyday words
- keep sentences short
- check for understanding
- spell out acronyms
- use an active voice.

Sentences written in an active voice require less effort to process and understand. Using an active voice means the person doing the action (subject) is introduced before the action (verb). The opposite is the passive voice, where the subject follows the verb. Here are some examples.

<b>Active voice:</b> <b>Subject + Verb + Object</b>	<b>Passive voice:</b> <b>Object + Verb + Subject</b>
We will do it.	It will be done by us.
Jane wrote the letter.	The letter was written by Jane.
The organisation will provide your accommodation.	Your accommodation will be provided by the organisation.

## Employment Assistance Fund

*The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) is funding available through the Commonwealth Government.*

It provides financial help to eligible people with disability and mental health conditions and their employers to purchase work-related modifications, equipment, Auslan services and workplace assistance and support services.

The EAF is available to eligible people with disability who are about to start a job, are self-employed or currently working for a business. It is also available to people who need specialised equipment to look for and prepare for a job. Employers submit an application through JobAccess, which advises on the status of the application and informs the employer if a workplace assessment is needed.

The EAF makes funds available to:

- pay for equipment or modifications to the workplace that enable individuals with disability to carry out their work
- fund assistance for deaf employees communicating via Auslan
- obtain interpreters for key training or meeting needs
- provide deaf awareness training for co-workers of a deaf employee
- access mental health awareness training in the workplace as well as funding for one-to-one support with a mental health specialist to assist with working on a work-based mental health plan
- make modifications to work vehicles.

You can read more about the EAF here: <http://aspirelr.link/employment-assistance-fund>.

## Workplace adjustments

*Any adjustment to equipment or resources affecting the person with disability must be made in consultation with the person.*

JobAccess is a national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers. Here are examples of solutions for some access issues faced by people with disability.

Adjustment required	Possible solutions
Accessible paths to the front door	Modifications include clear wide paths, ramps, safety kerbs, handrails and tactile ground surface indicators.
Car parks	Wider car bays with adequate clearance space above the car and marked with the international symbol for disabled access.
Accessible pathways within the building	Clear wide pathways, the presence of steps or other barriers, floor surfaces, ramps and rails, and tactile or visual indicators. Consider installing ramps for independent building access.
Doorways	Modifications include adequate circulation space, the ease of door opening and the requirement for visual indicators or colour contrast.

Adjustment required	Possible solutions
Workspace	Take into consideration the heights of desk and equipment, visual, tactile or auditory cues required, circulation space and the provision of specialised equipment, such as adaptive technology. Ensure accessibility to all areas of the workplace, including kitchen and bathroom amenities, and emergency exits.
Positioning of security pin pads for building access	Consider the height that is accessible from a wheelchair.
Access to other levels of a building when only stairs are fitted	Modifications include ramps, elevators, stair lifts or chair lifts.
Setup of kitchen amenities	Ensure access to the kettle, microwave, cutlery, plates, cups, fridge and sink.
Setup of toilet and bathroom amenities	Ensure access to the toilet, sink, bench, soap, hand towels and mirror. Consider fitting handrails in the toilet cubicle.

Source: JobAccess, 'Physical – Managing access to work and the office building':  
<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/physical1>

## Flexible work options

***Under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth), employees have a legal right to request flexible work arrangements from their employer.***

Eligibility requirements include that the employee has either been employed for at least 12 months or is in a full-time, part-time or a long-term casual role with a reasonable expectation of ongoing employment.

The grounds for refusing a flexible work arrangement request are similar to the 'unjustifiable hardship' option for refusing workplace adjustments. This includes:

- The new working arrangements requested by the employee would be too costly for the employer.
- There is no capacity to change the working arrangements of other employees to accommodate the new working arrangements requested by the employee.
- It would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other employees or recruit new employees to accommodate the new working arrangements requested by the employee.
- The new working arrangements requested by the employee are likely to result in significant loss of efficiency or productivity.
- The new working arrangements requested by the employee are likely to have a significant negative impact on customer service.

You can read more about flexible work options here: <http://aspirelr.link/flexible-working-arrangements>.

## Modifications to equipment

*The equipment needed to carry out work will vary greatly between job roles and tasks.*

Computer-based work is becoming part of most jobs, and requires thought to be given to all the tasks a person does at their workstation and the equipment required to do their job. Modifications may need to be made to someone's computer, desk, chair, keyboard and/or mouse.

All staff members require an ergonomic workstation so that tasks can be done in comfort and without placing strain on the body. The same goes for someone with a disability.

The following table provides some examples of adjustments you can make to the workplace and equipment to ensure good ergonomics for a person with disability.

Type of disability	Examples of workplace adjustments
<b>Restrictions in fine motor skills or movement of the hands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the individual has good postural and trunk stability to maximise hand use. This can be achieved by providing ergonomic seating.</li> <li>• Adaptive technology or equipment can be used to minimise or eliminate the fine motor skills required with some tasks, e.g. alternative computer controls like switches or eye controls.</li> <li>• Changes may be needed for safety reasons, such as providing machine guards for industrial equipment.</li> <li>• Tools used for cutting can be adapted with spring-loaded pins to stop the need to open tools after each cutting action.</li> <li>• Tasks can be changed regularly to reduce prolonged or repetitive activity in the hand and wrist.</li> <li>• Provide tools designed to keep the wrist in a neutral position, so that any force applied does not place excess strain on the wrist.</li> <li>• Use tools with non-slip grips, or wear non-slip gloves.</li> </ul>
<b>Deafness or hearing impairment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate space and lighting to allow the person to see the speaker's body language, facial expression and lip movements.</li> <li>• Encourage the use of hearing aids with a Bluetooth link that the person can use with other amplification and notification technology.</li> <li>• Provide captioning and amplification systems.</li> <li>• Provide visual alerts to supplement auditory alarms and/or paging devices.</li> <li>• Provide assistive listening systems (FM Systems).</li> </ul>
<b>Difficulties with problem solving, thinking, attention and memory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide aids such as graphic organisers.</li> <li>• Use a pin-up board or white board to display tasks and flowcharts.</li> <li>• Provide 'to do' lists that can be ticked off as each task is completed to help with tracking actions.</li> </ul>

Type of disability	Examples of workplace adjustments
Blindness or low vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure workplace lighting meets Australian Standards.</li> <li>• Consider additional lighting for increased brightness or contrast.</li> <li>• Place all frequently used items within easy reach.</li> <li>• Provide text-to-speech software to assist with reading text on-screen.</li> <li>• Provide a larger computer monitor to assist with viewing text, along with magnification software and modification of brightness and contrast levels.</li> <li>• Provide magnification aids or devices to magnify hard-copy documents.</li> <li>• Provide large-button mobiles with text to speech software for text messaging.</li> </ul>

Source: JobAccess, 'Disability and adjustment': <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au>

## Assistive technologies, devices and aids

*Assistive technology extends the range of activities that people with disability can perform.*

Anything that assists individuals to perform daily activities can be considered assistive technology. It includes devices, systems or designs used by individuals to perform tasks that might otherwise be difficult or impossible for them to complete.

Here are some examples of assistive technologies.

Category	Examples
Aids for daily living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating utensils</li> <li>• Page turners</li> <li>• Emergency call systems</li> </ul>
Augmentative communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication boards</li> <li>• Speech synthesisers</li> <li>• Modified typewriters</li> <li>• Head pointers</li> <li>• Text to voice software</li> </ul>
Computer access aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headsticks</li> <li>• Light pointers</li> <li>• Modified or alternate keyboards</li> <li>• Switches activated by pressure, sound or voice</li> <li>• Touch screens</li> <li>• Special software</li> <li>• Voice to text software</li> </ul>

Category	Examples
<b>Workplace modifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramps</li> <li>• Lifts</li> <li>• Automatic door openers</li> <li>• Expanded doorways</li> </ul>
<b>Prosthetics or orthotics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement or augmentation of body parts with artificial limbs</li> <li>• Splints</li> <li>• Braces</li> </ul>
<b>Mobility aids</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric or manual wheelchairs</li> <li>• Electric scooters</li> <li>• Modifications of vehicles for travel</li> <li>• Crutches</li> <li>• Canes</li> <li>• Walkers</li> </ul>
<b>Seating and positioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted seating</li> <li>• Cushions</li> <li>• Positioning belts</li> </ul>
<b>Sensory aids</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnifiers</li> <li>• Braille</li> <li>• Speech output devices</li> <li>• Large-print screens</li> <li>• Hearing aids</li> <li>• Visual alerting systems</li> <li>• Telecommunication devices</li> </ul>

**Adapted from:** Assistive Technology Australia, 'Assistive technology': <https://at-aust.org>

You can read more about assistive technologies from Independent Living Centres Australia (ILCA): <http://aspirelr.link/assistive-technology>.

## Support services

*Support services can be engaged by the organisation when needed.*

You may prefer to do your own research on support services available for disability, so you are informed on how to plan and implement additional supports for your staff.

Most disability groups are represented by a peak body that also provide valuable health information to the public. Some peak bodies will offer a list of services or suggested providers, such as Auslan interpreters for those who are hearing impaired. Health information and support service information can also be assessed from various government websites, including:

- <http://aspirelr.link/better-health>
- <http://aspirelr.link/health-direct>
- <http://aspirelr.link/skills-for-education-and-employment>
- <http://aspirelr.link/human-rights-commission>

Larger organisations provide specialist support services for people with disability and their employers. Smaller businesses may provide staff with support services they can contact, such as the following.

#### **Reading Writing Hotline**

A national telephone literacy referral service for adults who need assistance with reading, writing or basic mathematics.  
<http://aspirelr.link/reading-writing-hotline>

#### **Independent Living Centres (ILC)**

Provides independent, commercially unbiased, actionable information and advice to government and policy-makers, and raises awareness of the role that assistive technology plays in enabling whole life participation in the broader community.  
<http://aspirelr.link/ilca>

#### **Association of Consultants in Access Australia (ACAA)**

ACAA is a national membership-based professional association for people working to achieve accessibility of the built environment. It is the peak national body for accessing consultancy in Australia and a major partner in advancing equity of built environmental accessibility for people with disability.  
<http://aspirelr.link/aca>

#### **JobAccess**

Provides workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers.  
<http://aspirelr.link/job-access>

#### **Disability Employment Services (DES)**

DES provides support to people with disability and their employers, including coaching, mentoring and on-the-job training.  
<http://aspirelr.link/disability-employment-services>

#### **National Disability Recruitment Coordinator (NDRC)**

An NDRC helps larger employers access the skills and talents of people with disability.  
An NDRC can work with you to develop workplace policies and practices that accommodate people with disability. As well as providing a comprehensive job vacancy service, an NDRC conducts workplace training and employer seminars on disability awareness.  
<http://aspirelr.link/ndrc>

Example

## Supports and adjustments

Martin is returning to work after being involved in a motorcycle accident which left him with an acquired brain injury (ABI).

Martin's injury resulted in the following:

- some cognitive impairment, including memory loss, impaired decision-making and poor concentration
- physical fatigue, including weakened muscles, and slower movement and speech
- a loss of self-confidence.



Martin's manager Rosemary meets with him and his support worker to discuss what adjustments can be made in the workplace to accommodate Martin's needs.

Rosemary agrees to put the following supports and adjustments in place:

- Using a workplace buddy to provide Martin with extra support and encouragement.
- Allowing Martin to work part-time from 9am till midday.
- Partitioning off Martin's workspace to reduce noise and distractions.
- Breaking down job tasks into small steps and using visual prompts for each step to assist with his focus.
- Allowing Martin to have regular work breaks to accommodate his reduced attention span.
- Allowing Martin to change between sitting, standing and walking on a regular basis.



## Practice task 2

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Donna has a hearing impairment and is applying for a job. During the interview, the manager noticed Donna had trouble understanding some of the words used and needed to repeat some questions several times.

#### Question 1

Which of the following are things the manager could do to improve communication with Donna? Select all that apply.

- Ensure questions and answers use plain English and are easy to understand.
- Avoid asking questions about communicating with customers so that Donna won't be embarrassed.
- Ask Donna if she would prefer to move to a room that is not as noisy.
- Use hand gestures because people with hearing impairment are good at reading body language.
- Make sure there is nothing in the way of Donna seeing the face and mouth of the person speaking.

#### Question 2

Which of the following are examples of assistive technologies? Select all that apply.

- Modified or alternate keyboards
- Visual alerts to supplement auditory emergency alarms
- Speech therapy provided by a specialist support service
- Braille and speech output devices
- Pressure-activated appliances
- Consultants for advice on setting up an ergonomic workstation

# 1C

## Providing information to staff

***A workplace built on trust and inclusiveness can help staff with disability feel more comfortable and accepted.***

The Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) states it is against the law to discriminate against a job applicant because of disability. This should be stated in workplace policies and procedures, which must be developed in line with legislation.

Employers have a duty to inform staff who may have a disability of reasonable adjustments that could be implemented to make the workplace more inclusive and accessible.

### Disclosure of disability

***There is no requirement for an employee to disclose their disability to their employer if it is not likely to impact on their work performance.***

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission states the following:

- Physical tests should relate strictly to someone's ability to carry out the work, such as lifting a certain weight or sitting stationary for a long time.
- Psychological and aptitude tests should relate specifically to the genuine and reasonable requirements of the job.
- These tests must be given to all job applicants and employees, not just anyone an employer thinks may have a disability or injury.
- The results must be kept completely confidential.

While there is no obligation for an employee to disclose their disability, non-disclosure means that adjustments or modifications to the workplace will not be made.

### Policies and procedures

***Organisations should have policies and procedures on disability in place outlining how people's rights will be protected.***

Policies and procedures may relate to the support the organisation will provide to make reasonable adjustments for a person with disability so they can perform their job safely and effectively.

Policies might refer to disability in the following contexts:

- Access and equity – The right of all staff to be given dignity by being treated fairly and having the same opportunities as everyone else.
- Reasonable adjustment – Adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of staff with disability.
- Disclosure – Staff are not obliged to disclose disability; however, if they choose to, such information will be treated confidentially.
- Disclosure may be necessary to provide adjustments and accommodation as needed.

Procedures related to disability can include:

- Adjustments to facilities, equipment and communication tools
- Disability support from internal and external sources
- Maintaining the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of staff

## Process for disclosure

*The organisation's disability policy/procedure should clearly indicate the steps involved to disclose disability and the process that will take place.*

A process from disclosure to implementing support might involve the following steps.



Example

## Workplace adjustment procedure

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) includes the following procedure for requesting adjustments to the workplace.

### Workplace Adjustment Procedure

- A request for a workplace adjustment may be lodged by a job applicant, employee, manager or rehabilitation case manager.
- The manager reviews the request and decides on its reasonableness giving consideration to:
  - the benefit of the adjustment to the employee
  - the cost of the adjustment or other relevant operational matters
  - the potential risk of not implementing an identified adjustment in terms of an occupational injury or illness.
- The manager or rehabilitation case manager makes the decision of whether to implement the adjustment.
- Funding for workplace adjustments proceeds through the Employment Assistance Fund.
- The adjustments are made as soon as practicable.
- Adjustments are reviewed after three months.
- Employees dissatisfied with a decision or action taken in relation to a claim for reasonable adjustment may seek a review under the Review of Actions Policy.

**Adapted from:** National Health and Medical Research Council, *Workplace Adjustment Policy*: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au>

## Privacy, confidentiality and dignity

*In Australia, information collected about individuals is regulated by the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).*

All staff must follow the organisation's protocols, policies and procedures. These are usually underpinned by legislation. Many organisational requirements relate to the way personal information is dealt with. This includes:

- securely storing personal information
- sharing information with others
- requesting personal information about another person.

**Privacy**

Privacy means freedom from intrusion and embarrassment. It relates to all information and practice that is personal or sensitive in nature to an individual.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is about data or information (both verbal and written). It refers to managing access to private information. Confidentiality restricts an individual or organisation from using, storing and disclosing information about a person that is outside of the scope (purpose) for which the information was collected.

**Dignity**

Dignity refers to an individual's right to be respected and provided with ethical treatment. It describes personal conduct that enables the person the right to have their concerns heard, and their wishes listened to and carried out. Respecting a person's privacy and confidentiality underpins the right of dignity.

Procedures relating to confidentiality, dignity and privacy are likely to include:

- definitions of confidentiality, privacy and dignity
- the purpose of collecting information
- the types of information that can be collected
- how information is used
- how long information is kept for
- how confidentiality is maintained
- how information is stored securely
- under what circumstances information can be disclosed to others
- employee access to information.

## Creating an inclusive workplace

***As a manager, you can help to create a workplace culture where staff feel safe to disclose their disability.***

In an inclusive environment that respects diversity, an employee is more likely to disclose their support needs. Aim to promote an inclusive workplace by demonstrating the benefits of diversity to staff. In an inclusive environment that respects diversity, an employee is more likely to disclose their support needs.

<b>Tips to create a positive work culture for people with disability</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively recruit people with disability.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct disability awareness training of staff.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Put in place flexible work policies and procedures.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create accessible workplaces through modifications and reasonable adjustments.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster an environment that values diversity.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster supportive manager–staff working relationships.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster an environment in which staff feel it is okay to ask for help.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treat all personal information confidentially.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote success stories.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote the benefits of disclosure as empowering and protective.</li></ul>

## Workplace initiatives

*There are benefits both to an organisation and to the people who disclose their disability.*

Staff need to be informed about the supports and adjustments available to them, the benefits of requesting support, and the processes through which they can discuss additional support needs.

<b>When someone chooses to disclose their disability, take the following steps:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge the challenges faced and how these can be overcome.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge the abilities people have and how they can be optimised with the right supports in place.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set the person up for success by providing the resources to complete the inherent requirements of the job.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build their self-confidence through the development of new skills.</li></ul>

The staff member may request a one-on-one meeting to help them decide the actions they would like to take and the next steps involved.

When communicating initiatives, consider the person's needs and the most appropriate means of communication. Initiatives may include:

- offering training onsite or offsite or via online learning modules
- updating policies and procedures and/or corporate messages to be more inclusive
- making physical changes to the workplace so that areas are more accessible
- allowing flexible work options.

## Processes to inform staff

*As a manager, you should provide information on the processes staff can use to learn about available supports and discuss their support needs.*

Ensure you offer a number of ways to access the information, including allowing the staff member to remain anonymous. This helps to meet the privacy and confidentiality requirements and laws around disclosure.

Method or process	Description
Online resources	<p>Online resources (including on the staff intranet or on a website open to the public) are a useful way for organisations to share information with staff. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policies and procedures</li> <li>• information and links to the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)</li> <li>• guides on the laws, rights and responsibilities of managers and employees</li> <li>• guides on the affirmative action for recruiting people with disability</li> <li>• toolkits for managers that explain the process and the legislation relating to disclosure</li> <li>• videos on reasonable adjustment</li> <li>• links to external information, services and resources for additional supports</li> <li>• good news stories on the benefits of disclosure.</li> </ul>
Workplace support teams	<p>An organisation may assemble a dedicated workplace support team consisting of both internal and external resources. The combined expertise of the support team can be a valuable source of information and provide a consultative role for staff wellbeing. The actions of the team would be governed by the organisation's disability policies and procedures.</p> <p>The team may provide confidential advice on disclosure and organise supports. Roles might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• senior HR managers for decision-making and governance oversight</li> <li>• disability coordinators to work with managers and staff to implement supports</li> <li>• JobAccess case managers to provide external support assessment services and funding advice</li> <li>• specialists invited into the team to develop a support implementation plan.</li> </ul>

Method or process	Description
Hotlines	<p>Many organisations, including government agencies, have phone lines that provide information about disability and the services, supports and funding available. Workplaces can provide links to these helplines through their websites and advertise them on noticeboards around the workplace, on the intranet and in staff emails.</p> <p>Hotlines provide an anonymous way for people to receive information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how to disclose their disability to their manager or the organisation</li><li>• what protections they have (including privacy and confidentiality) when disclosing information</li><li>• the range of supports available</li><li>• the process for arranging supports</li><li>• the process for raising complaints of discrimination based on their disability.</li></ul>

Here are some examples of helplines and the types of information they provide.

#### Department of Human Services

Information about disability payments and services available through the federal government:

<http://aspirelr.link/dept-human-services>

#### National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

For reporting mistreatment of people with disability:

<http://aspirelr.link/national-disability-abuse-neglect-hotline>

#### Disability Housing Information Line

Advice to people living in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), their supporters and accommodation providers:

<http://aspirelr.link/disability-housing-information-line>

#### Mental health support services

Advice and support for people with mental health issues. These include:

- Lifeline: <http://aspirelr.link/lifeline>
- Headspace: <http://aspirelr.link/headspace>
- Beyond Blue: <http://aspirelr.link/beyondblue>

#### JobAccess

Jobseeker and employer hotlines for matters relating to employing people with disability:

<http://aspirelr.link/job-access>

### Disability Employment Services

Helping people with disability to prepare for, find and keep a job:  
<http://aspirelr.link/disability-employment-services>

### Mental Health Line

A confidential mental health telephone triage service that provides the first point of contact to public mental health services:  
<http://aspirelr.link/mental-health-line>

## Example

### Accessibility and inclusion plan

In 2016, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia launched a mental health and wellbeing platform. It offers staff a portal with access to information on more than 50 topics related to mind, body and life. It hosts articles written by industry experts, as well as videos, webinars, training and a space for employees to share their personal stories. The portal links to a live chat with a counsellor for people seeking information.

As part of its accessibility and inclusion plan, Commonwealth Bank introduced the following initiatives around mental health and wellbeing:



- senior leadership and executive manager mental health briefings
- dedicated Safety Day campaigns on wellbeing and mental health
- the consolidation of Employment Assistance Programs across seven countries, including the introduction of online chat functionality to accompany face-to-face and over-the-phone counselling
- a three-part campaign for employees and managers to understand the importance of recognising the signs and having a conversation with an employee who is struggling
- the development of a group-wide mental health and wellbeing approach
- a practical workshop for managers and HR in managing mental health in the workplace
- mental wellbeing toolkits for employees, managers and HR operatives
- best practice for mental health intervention framework
- mental health activities embedded into the group's safety plans, including Mental Health Month in October and participation in the national RUOK? Day.



## Practice task 3

### Question 1

Which of the following could be found in a confidentiality, dignity and privacy policy? Select all that apply.

- The way workplace adjustments are determined
- The types of supports available in the workplace
- The purpose of collecting information
- The types of information collected
- How confidentiality will be maintained

### Question 2

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- |  |       |      |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Staff must disclose their disability in a one-on-one discussion with their manager so arrangements can be made for adjustments or modifications to the workplace. | * Yes | * No |
| b) Actively recruiting people with disability shows an inclusive work culture.   | * Yes | * No |
| c) Examples of reasonable adjustments made for particular employees can be used to encourage staff to disclose their disability.                                     | * Yes | * No |
| d) The manager can provide information on support services, such as a team who can provide assistance to staff.  | * Yes | * No |
| e) Information for resources and support services, such as hotlines to call for information, can be provided online via the intranet or in emails sent to staff.     | * Yes | * No |



## Summary

- Legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has been created to protect the rights of people with disability.
- Reasonable adjustments should be made to the workplace to assist people with disability.
- The Fair Work Act protects employees when employers take adverse action against them on the grounds of disability.
- Support strategies and adjustments must be tailored for each person's circumstances.
- Workplace modifications include facilities, equipment, flexible work options and the use of assistive technologies, devices and aids.
- Organisations should look to supplement workplace adjustments with both internal and external supports.
- People have the right to choose whether they disclose their disability.
- In all dealings with people with disability, their privacy, dignity and confidentiality must be preserved.



# Learning checkpoint 1

## Promoting disability support

### Part A

Read the first case study and answer the questions that follow.

#### Case study 1

Joanne is an adult who was in a sporting accident eight months ago. The accident left her paraplegic with an acquired brain injury which has affected her speech and attention. Joanne has slow and often slurred speech and has trouble finding the right words. She is returning to work with the assistance of Kevin, a JobAccess consultant.

Kevin suggests the following workplace adjustments be made for Joanne:

- moving the security pin pad so that it is at a height that Joanne can access
- installing additional rails in the bathroom
- allowing a flexible work schedule and flexible use of leave
- allowing longer breaks or more frequent short breaks to be taken throughout the day
- introducing specialised voice-to-text software
- making modifications to vehicles when Joanne is required to travel to meet clients
- establishing a buddy program with a co-worker to provide extra support and encouragement for Joanne
- setting up prompts, reminders and checklists to assist Joanne with problem-solving
- using the services of a consultant to help in designing the modifications required by Joanne
- providing contact phone numbers to support services from peak body organisations representing specific disabilities.

1. Which of the following are examples of reasonable adjustments that could be made to support Joanne? Select all that apply.

- Sending to-do lists in plain English so Joanne and her manager can track when jobs have been completed
- Offering Joanne a buddy program with a co-worker to provide support if she wants
- Offering Joanne flexible work hours, such as working three days per week
- Providing Joanne with a hands-free telephone or headset
- Employing a support specialist to work with Joanne to set up her workstation in a way that suits her needs
- Positioning security pin pads for access at a height accessible from a wheelchair
- Providing a communication board that Joanne has chosen to suit her needs

2. Match each of the reasonable adjustments on the left to the type of adjustment on the right.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| * Assistive technology, devices and aids | * Moving the security pin pad so that it is at a height that Joanne can access                 |
| * Support service                        | * Allowing longer breaks or more frequent short breaks taken throughout the day                |
| * Flexible work option                   | * Introducing specialised voice-to-text software   |
| * Workplace modification                 | * Setting up prompts, reminders and checklists to assist Joanne with problem-solving           |
| * Cognitive support                      | * Using the services of a consultant to help in designing the modifications required by Joanne |

3. Joanne's organisation is working with Kevin to have the modifications to the workplace funded through the Employment Assistance Fund. This is a grant made available under which piece of legislation?

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth)*
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- The National Disability Strategy

## Part B

Read the second case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study 2

Paul disclosed to his employer that he had an intellectual disability. Over time, Paul's employer reduced his hours so that he was eventually given less than half the work hours prior to when he made his disclosure. Other employees did not have their hours reduced. When Paul confronted his employer about this, he was told that he was unable to work his previous hours because his disability prevented him from doing so.

1. The employer's decision to reduce Paul's hours is an adverse action under which piece of legislation?

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth)*
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- The National Disability Strategy

2. Which of the following are priority areas under the National Disability Strategy? Select all that apply.

- Health and wellbeing
- Funding for better design in mobility aids
- Economic security for people with disability
- The inclusion of the rights of people with disability in the Australian Constitution
- The advancement of learning and skills for people with disability

## Part C

Read the third case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study 3

Patrick is a manager who wants to do more to raise awareness amongst staff of the support and assistance available in the organisation for disability. The business has an internal intranet that is well used by staff and includes a range of work-related matters, such as policies and procedures, working conditions and the latest company news. There is no information on the intranet about disability.

1. List **four** suggestions that Patrick could make for the type of information to be placed on the intranet that might encourage and support members to share information on their disability.





## Topic 2

# Planning the implementation of support needs with staff

*Good planning is an essential part of supporting staff in the workplace.*

Supports must be tailored for the individual staff member with disability, who is expected to drive and direct the process. Communication skills can allow you to obtain a good understanding of the staff member's personal preferences and how the business can meet those needs.

In this topic you will learn about:

- 2A Consulting with staff
- 2B Establishing goals and expectations

## 2A

## Consulting with staff

***Consultation is an inclusive process that places the staff member at the centre of any dialogue and decision-making.***

If you are in charge of reviewing and implementing supports, you must follow the principles of confidentiality, dignity and privacy. This will help to build an environment where staff feel safe discussing their disability, needs and preferences for individual supports.

When you consult with staff, you need to ask questions to gather information for planning reasonable adjustment. You will need to consult with the staff member about:

- their work abilities according to their job role and responsibilities
- the challenges or barriers that inhibit their ability to perform their job, such as physical barriers like workplace design or communication barriers such as required assistive and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies.



## Person-first language

***Inclusive language is appropriate when communicating with and about people with disability.***

Person-first language places the disability as a secondary consideration.

Consider the following examples of ways to describe a person with disability.

Person-first language	Disability-first language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who is deaf</li> <li>• Person who is hearing impaired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf person</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who is blind</li> <li>• Person who is visually impaired</li> <li>• Person who has low vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blind person</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with disability</li> <li>• Person with a physical disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled person</li> <li>• Physically challenged person</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a mental illness</li> <li>• Person with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentally ill person</li> <li>• Mentally disabled person</li> <li>• Bipolar, schizophrenic, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person using a wheelchair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair-bound person</li> </ul>

Keep in mind that the person with disability can identify themselves however they choose. For example, autistic people often prefer to be called autistic rather than 'person with autism' because they don't have autism; it is who they are.

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) works with businesses to develop strategies to welcome people with disabilities into the workplace.

AND provides some examples of ways to use inclusive person-first language:

- Change the focus from disability to accessibility.
- Don't make out that people with disability are victims or objects of pity. Just because a person experiences disability, it does not make them weak, a victim or someone to be pitied. Examples of language that can imply people should be pitied include 'suffering from...' and 'afflicted by...'
- Don't use terms such as 'wheelchair-bound'. A person who uses a wheelchair is not bound or confined by the chair; they are enabled and liberated by it and it can become an extension of their body.
- Don't use language that implies a person with disability is inspirational simply because they experience disability. Also avoid using terms such as 'disAbility' and 'special needs'. Implying that a person with disability is courageous or special just for getting through the day can be considered patronising and offensive.

More information on person-first language can be found here: <http://aspirelr.link/inclusive-language>.

## Building rapport and trust

*Positive communication can help develop rapport and trust with staff.*

Some staff with disability find it confronting to be asked about their work abilities and challenges. To overcome this, ensure the person feels relaxed and reiterate the benefits of sharing personal information as a way to help them overcome their difficulties. Having a relationship based on trust with the employee will assist in an honest exchange. This is more likely to occur in a one-on-one conversation.

Rapport helps to establish a bond or connection with someone. It involves verbal and non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions and body language. One method for building rapport is matching and mirroring. This is about actively listening to what is being said and observing the other person's non-verbal communication. This leads to a shared understanding and creates a positive feeling in both parties to help them build respect and trust going forward.

Trust is established over time and is built on experiences. Aim to build trust with staff by:

- showing you can be relied on
- being transparent and not hiding information
- being consistent in what you say and do
- following through on promises and keeping your word.

## Communication techniques

*Asking the right questions means clarifying information and checking for a common understanding.*

The goal for both parties is to agree on the support and adjustments to be made and formulate an implementation plan. Here are different types of questions that help to clarify and obtain information.

### Closed questions

These elicit one-word answers and do not open up a conversation. They are good for confirming information. For example, you may ask, 'Is "hearing impaired" an appropriate term to use to describe your disability?'

### Open questions

These allow the respondent to provide more information and usually begin with words such as 'How...', 'Why...', 'Describe...', 'Explain...', 'Tell me about...'

### Funnel questions

These begin with general topics and then drill down to more specific information. For example:

- 'What challenges are you currently facing in your role?'
- 'How does this particular challenge impact your ability to do your job?'
- 'What is it about your short-term memory that makes this difficult for you?'

### Probing questions

These are useful for obtaining more accurate or detailed information. Examples include:

- 'Can you give me an example of how this affects you?'
- 'Do you know of any supports or adjustments that would make this easier for you?'

### Checking for understanding

These questions usually frame a statement that summarises what has been discussed. It is very important to confirm understanding at each stage of the discussion and implementation. This is particularly important for those people who may suffer from cognitive decline and have trouble remembering or comprehending conversations. It is important to provide a written summary of your discussion in plain English that also signposts the next steps.

Questions that check for understanding include:

- 'Can you please repeat what I said so I can be sure that I was clear?'
- 'Does what I have just said accurately summarise what we talked about?'
- 'Is there anything I forgot to mention?'
- 'Is there anything you are unclear or unsure about?'
- 'Do you have any other questions at this stage?'
- 'Are you OK for me to proceed?'

## Discussing support needs

*When a staff member is ready to discuss their support needs with a manager, a confidential meeting can be arranged.*

The Fair Work Ombudsman suggests that requests for a flexible work arrangement should be made in writing outlining what change is being sought and why. If you receive these requests, you must have a discussion with the staff member and consider their needs, the consequences if the changes are not made and any reasonable grounds for refusing the request. A one-on-one conversation is preferable, but in some organisations you may ask the human resources manager to be involved to ensure you follow the correct procedure and policies during the discussion.

You should do the following in an initial conversation:

- Acknowledge the step the person has taken to disclose their disability and to seek support.
- Reinforce the confidential nature of the conversation.
- Determine the communication needs of the person, such as requiring an AAC device.
- Determine who else should attend the meeting, such as a support person for the staff member or a representative from the HR team.
- Only refer to the person’s disability if it is necessary or relevant.
- Do not rush the conversation; allow the person to say everything they wish to in the way they prefer.

Example of the format of the meeting
1. Discuss the inherent requirements of the job.
2. Discuss the person’s abilities to perform in the role.
3. Discuss the challenges the person faces and their needs that arise from these challenges.
4. Ask what support the person is aware of that can assist in meeting their needs.
5. Introduce other supports the person may not be aware of.
6. Discuss expectations in providing additional support and adjustments.

## Example

## Consulting with staff

Alan has autism and has difficulty with social interaction and communicating with staff. Alan and his manager, Debra, have had an initial conversation about how the workplace can better support him. Alan finds he sometimes misses deadlines, especially when they are changed or when his tasks are altered by his manager.

Debra is aware that Alan has difficulty organising his thoughts during conversations. She holds the discussion with Alan in a quiet room free of distraction. Debra starts the conversation by saying that any decision about changes must be agreed on by Alan and can be changed at any time with Alan's input.

She asks Alan about his job, the tasks he does regularly and where he is having difficulty. She regularly checks for understanding throughout the conversation. As they talk, Debra makes notes to refer to later.

At the end of the discussion, Debra summarises what has been discussed and asks Alan if this is correct and if he would like to add anything else. Alan makes some more comments that Debra repeats back to check her understanding.

After the meeting, Debra sends an email to Alan summarising their conversation and gives him a printout.



## Practice task 4

### Question 1

Rewrite the following sentences using person-first expressions and inclusive language.

- The team consisted of vision-impaired staff and able-bodied volunteers.
- Wheelchair-bound people can access the amenities by using the ramp to the left of the building.
- Sally was struck down with cerebral palsy when she was a child.
- I admire the way Debbie pretends she doesn't have a disability and just gets on with life.

## Question 2

Which of the following are correct for discussions with staff on work abilities, challenges and needs? Select all that apply.

- Having an established relationship based on trust will assist in an honest exchange.
- 'What is the appropriate term to use to describe your disability?' is an example of a probing question.
- A manager must consider the financial consequences to the business if reasonable adjustments are made.
- Only the inherent requirements of the job can be discussed during meetings about support needs.
- Always refer to the person's disability to make sure you are using the correct terminology.

## 2B

## Establishing goals and expectations

*Setting goals and expectations will ensure the right supports are implemented.*

Goals and expectations must come from the staff member with disability and be in their best interests. Once these have been established, the expected benefits can be clarified, and an agreement can be documented.

Ensure that all options are presented and discussed so that the staff member can identify which options will best suit their needs. To determine their personal preferences, the staff member will need to consider:

- the types of supports they require, such as assistive technology
- the extent to which a strategy or support will assist them to complete their job
- the extent to which modifications may need to be customised or adapted
- the time frames for supports to be in place
- the ongoing support and monitoring that needs to be provided.



## Clarifying expectations

*Expectations need to be discussed to make sure they are realistic for all parties.*

Here are examples of reasonable adjustments that may be agreed on.

Reasonable adjustment	Employee expectations
Appointing a work buddy	A work buddy will be appointed to establish a routine, such as spending the first 15 minutes of the day together to establish priorities and where tools such as reminders can be used.  Check in at the end of the day to identify tasks accomplished, any issues or barriers and ways to overcome these, and what information needs to be given to the manager.
Flexible work options	No adjustments required to work hours or leave requirements.
Modifications to work practices	Weekly reports to the manager need to allow an additional 20 minutes to discuss progress, monitor adjustments and gather feedback.  Changes to routines or task requirements are to be communicated as soon as possible and followed up with a written outline.
Modifications to equipment	HR will meet with Alan to discuss the use of software applications to assist with scheduling and reminders of tasks and timelines.  The IT team will arrange for the installation and training session on how to use the apps.

## Setting goals

*Once expectations have been discussed, the implementation plan can be developed with a focus on specific goals.*

There are several ways that goals may be determined. One way is using the SMART method, outlined here.

### Specific

Goals must be well defined and clear to everyone involved.



### Measurable

There must be clear and specific outcome indicators to track progress towards the goal.



### Attainable

Goals must not be set that exceed the person's capabilities. The staff member must participate in the goal-setting and decision-making process so you can agree on achievable aims.



### Relevant

Goals must be relevant to the work performed by the staff member or organisation.



### Time-framed

Goals must have a time frame. For complex or long-term goals, setting key milestones on the time frame will help the person to achieve them. Goals need to have a clear amount of time dedicated to them.



## Example

## Setting SMART goals

Following on from the previous example, one of the adjustments and expectations for Alan is to modify equipment. HR will meet to discuss new layout of equipment and the purchase of new software, and will liaise with IT to have it set up on Alan's computer.

This could be broken down into several SMART goals:

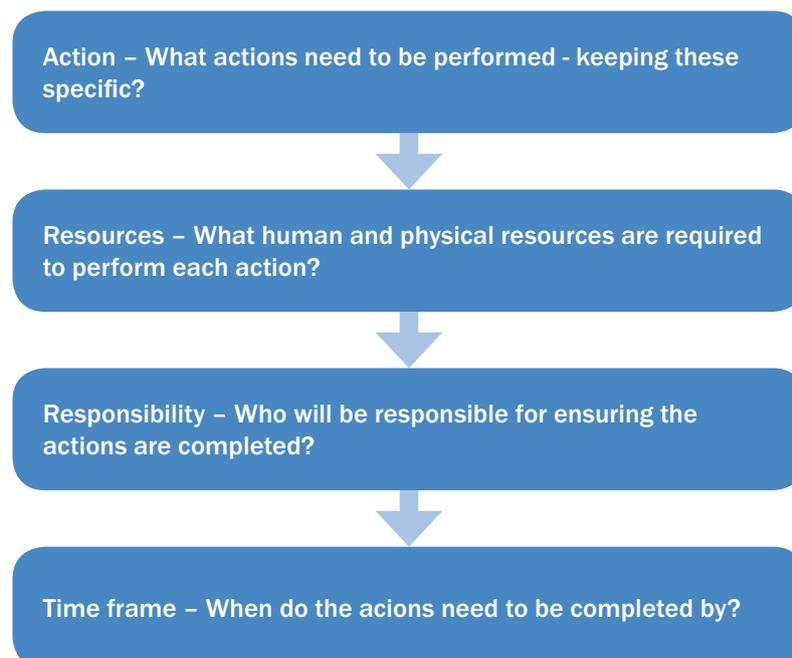
- Specific – Alan wants support from his workplace with social interactions and communication with other staff. He also wants to complete his work tasks to meet deadlines and schedules.
- Measurable – Alan will be involved in the selection process for his workplace buddy. HR will provide Alan with a choice of apps.
- Attainable – Alan will provide feedback on the suitability of the apps.
- Relevant – HR will shortlist a number of suitable apps and Alan will determine their suitability to meet his needs.
- Time-framed – A buddy will be appointed in one week. Modifications to work practices and equipment will be completed in two weeks' time.



## Implementation plan

*Plans should provide enough detail on the actions that need to be performed to achieve the desired goals.*

Plans usually follow a pattern similar to the one below.



An important aspect of determining expectations and goals is for the manager to identify the resources required and ongoing costs that will be necessary for providing, maintaining and monitoring services and resources. This will have implications for the rollout of the plan and for the time frame of when the staff member can expect to see changes occur.

Resources may include additional time of staff to monitor the plan and the resources required to implement supports, such as expert advice or an assessment to be undertaken. Here is a summary of some resources that may be needed:

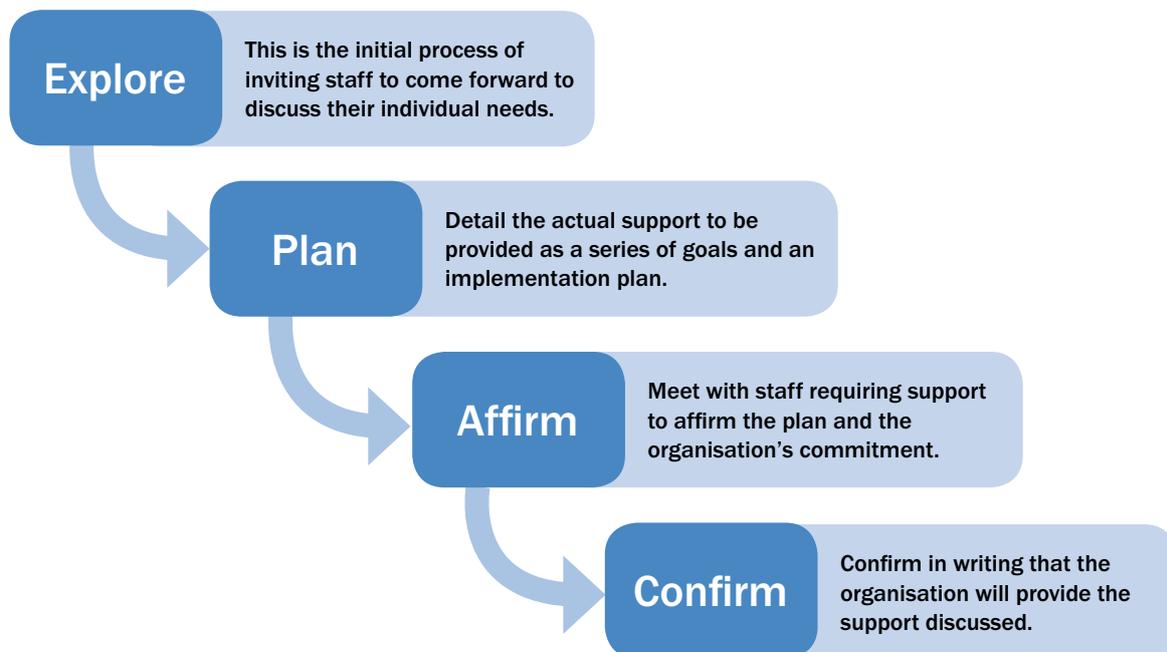
- people such as HR staff, manager, IT department, equipment installers and technicians, trainers, therapists and other professionals, medical practitioners, workplace assessors and procurement personnel
- financial resources such as government funding or internal funding provided by the organisation
- IT such as software, hardware and cloud-based applications
- equipment, facilities and raw materials for modifications
- reports and plans necessary for decision-making, such as workplace capacity assessments.

## Formalising agreements

*Gain agreement to ensure that staff requiring support are happy to proceed.*

Any agreement should be in writing and should be saved in the organisation's information system according to workplace policies and procedures. In larger organisations copies of agreements may be saved on personnel files. If there is an implementation plan, this can be attached to the signed formal agreement.

Your organisation is likely to have a process to gain agreement from staff on reasonable adjustments. It may include the following steps.



For example, a request form may be required by the staff member that requires the following information:

- personal details
- description of the work restrictions; for example, there is no lift to the third floor or the employee's desk is not high enough to accommodate a wheelchair
- information on the adjustments they require (if they are unaware of suitable adjustments, the business can arrange for an assessment to be made)
- consent to contact third parties such as medical practitioners, allied health professionals and disability service providers
- duration of the agreement and a review date
- signatures of all parties, including the applicant, manager or supervisor and other parties such as the HR representative.

## Example

### Establishing plans and agreements

Martin manages an accounts team in a government department. He has agreed with an alliance partner to provide a 12-month placement for Juan, one of the employees. Juan has a mild intellectual disability and some learning difficulties. He wishes to improve his administration skills.

Martin pairs Juan with Steven, who works in archives. Samantha is a case manager, who works with both Juan and Martin to establish an implementation plan. The plan includes:

- Samantha works with Juan in the first month to establish routines and to familiarise himself with the tasks that Juan will perform.
- Samantha helps to establish a workspace for Juan.
- Juan will complete a site induction.
- A communication protocol will be established with Juan and his co-workers.
- Martin will meet with Juan to establish his flexible working hours.
- A buddy system will be set up with Steven, with clear expectations.

When the implementation plan is completed, Juan, Martin and Samantha sit down to talk through the plan, ensuring that Juan understands and agrees to what is involved. Samantha develops and prints a simple agreement that is then attached to a workplace agreement between the two companies, which all three parties sign. On the day that Juan starts his placement, Martin's team holds a morning tea to welcome him.





## Practice task 5

### Question 1

Which of the following statements are correct when establishing goals and expectations for a staff member with disability? Select yes or no for each one.

- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) The manager will meet with the rest of the management team and together they will decide on the supports the staff member requires. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| b) A reasonable expectation is that resources will be provided by the business to help identify and implement support goals.           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| c) 'SMART' stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-framed.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| d) The duration of the agreement and a review date are important so the staff member knows when to expect to see changes.              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

### Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to gain agreement to implement a support plan.

- Formalise the agreement.
- Develop an implementation plan.
- Arrange a meeting.
- Receive a request for reasonable adjustment.
- Determine expectations.
- Set goals.



## Summary

- The staff member with disability must drive the process of consultation.
- Using person-first language means that the person's humanity is expressed before their disability is mentioned.
- Trust must be established when discussing support needs with a person with disability.
- When discussing needs, use a mix of open and closed questions to gain the information.
- Part of creating an implementation plan is checking that the expectations of the staff member are expressed and can be met through the support being planned.
- Setting SMART goals will mean the staff member gets the specific support they need when and where they need it.
- Implementation plans should include actions, resources, responsibilities and time frames.
- A formal agreement with the staff member can indicate what support is being provided and what commitment the workplace is making in providing that support.



## Learning checkpoint 2

### Planning the implementation of support needs with staff

#### Part A

1. Which of the following statements use person-first language? Select all that apply.

- Her daughter has autism.
- ABC Ability is an organisation that helps intellectually handicapped individuals.
- This is a school for the deaf.
- An education support teacher has many opportunities to help individuals with disabilities.
- There was a blind girl on the bus today.
- I saw a TV show about a woman with schizophrenia.

#### Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

#### Case study

Robyn manages a large customer service team. She receives an email from one of her staff members, Pat, who wants to discuss a private matter with her. Pat works in customer accounts and is responsible for debt collection. Pat is an older worker who is experiencing reduced cognitive functioning. This has resulted in her experiencing memory loss and impaired reasoning when making decisions on behalf of customers. Pat was reluctant to come forward as she is fearful of losing her job and believes that if this happens, she would struggle to find work again.

Pat has thought about what could help her to complete her work responsibilities:

- Establish a set work routine for each workday with her manager.
- Move her workstation to an area with fewer distractions.
- Generate a to-do list at the start of each day and use reminders to keep on task.

1. Write a SMART goal for each of the workplace adjustments identified by Pat.

2. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- |   |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) Robyn should arrange a one-on-one conversation with Pat and acknowledge Pat's step in seeking support.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| b) Robyn should ask Pat what supports she can suggest that would assist her.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| c) Robyn will ask Pat's co-workers to read and agree on the strategies that will be implemented for her.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| d) The duration of the agreement and a review date are important so the staff member knows when to expect to see changes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| e) Robyn will need to consider the resources required to implement, maintain and monitor the adjustments to Pat's work.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

3. Robyn and Pat agree to implement each of Pat's suggestions and to have Bill as Pat's workplace buddy. Bill will assist Pat to make workplace adjustments as part of her plan.

Outline an example for each of the following steps for implementing Pat's plan:

- a) Actions
- b) Resources
- c) Person responsible
- d) Time frame





## Topic 3

# Implementing support needs for staff

*Implementation involves putting agreed strategies in place and checking they are fit for purpose.*

When you are planning to implement modifications or make adjustments to assist a staff member with disability, you need to consider all of the people that need to be informed and involved. This might include people from within and outside the organisation. Consideration also needs to be given to communication required to ensure a smooth implementation process.

In this topic you will learn about:

- 3A Workplace arrangements to provide support
- 3B Monitoring the effectiveness of supports

# 3A

## Workplace arrangements to provide support

*Every business has a set of policies and procedures that staff must follow.*

Policies outline the requirements, processes and rules in keeping with legislation. They include processes that the organisation feels are the safest way to follow the laws, given its specific situation. This includes the type of business or industry, the staffing arrangements and the resources available (including financial resources).

### Policies and procedures for providing support

*Policies and procedures related to providing support to staff members with disability should be based on diversity, inclusion and reasonable adjustment.*

These documents are important for the following reasons:

- They reflect the relevant legislation and provide practical guidelines for ensuring that the legislation is followed.
- They outline processes that are clear to all parties and provide a fair and consistent framework for decision-making.
- They provide an outline of the types of support available so managers can be clear about the expectations of staff.
- They provide an escalation point or point of appeal for the staff member if they believe the process has not been followed.

In larger organisations with a human resources department, this team will make the appropriate arrangements for financing the required adjustments and modifications. The funds may come from internal budgets or from government funding, such as through the Australian Government's Employment Assistance Fund (EAF). More information about the EAF can be accessed here: <http://aspirelr.link/employment-assistance-fund>.



Example

## Reasonable adjustment procedure

Here is a procedure for making reasonable adjustments to a workplace.

<b>Reasonable Workplace Adjustments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The staff member will receive a response within 10 days of submitting a request for reasonable adjustment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All managers will contact the Director of Human Resources (or nominee), when they receive a request for reasonable adjustment to discuss the nature, degree and cost of the adjustment required.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each type of adjustment will be considered on its merits and be related to the specific disability and the inherent requirements of the job.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the provision or implementation of a reasonable adjustment will take longer than 10 business days, the steps taken to carry out the adjustment will be discussed with the employee and documented.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any assessment will be conducted in the workplace and will involve the employee as one of the main sources of information on the adjustment sought.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Director of Human Resources (or nominee) will be responsible for organising any external workplace assessments through the Australian Government's Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A final decision on whether an adjustment is reasonable will be made by the Director of Human Resources for adjustments up to \$20,000, and by the CEO (or nominee) for adjustments in excess of \$20,000.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where no costs are involved (for example, for job redesign initiatives or office space reorganisation), a decision can be made by employee's immediate manager.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any appeals about reasonable adjustment decisions should go through existing employee grievance procedures.</li> </ul>

## The manager's role

*As a manager, you have a key responsibility in ensuring the success of implementing supports for staff.*

Your role is to oversee the implementation and coordinate the various activities required.

Depending on the scale of the supports being implemented, you may elect to develop a mini project plan to assist with capturing all the associated tasks.

Steps for implementing workplace adjustments
1. Seek advice from within or outside of the business and arrange a workplace assessment.
2. Obtain agreement on supports and adjustments to be provided.
3. Discuss time frames for implementation.
4. Arrange for the implementation.
5. Obtain feedback on the performance of the adjustments and supports.
6. Identify changes and alterations to supports and adjustments.
7. Organise ongoing monitoring.

Your responsibilities may include:

- Advise employees of the reasonable adjustment policy and procedure during their orientation and performance appraisals.
- Ensure that information about the reasonable adjustment policy is readily available in work areas and accessible via the organisation's intranet or external website.
- Approve or reject all requests for reasonable adjustments (in conjunction with the HR staff).
- Arrange additional help to implement supports if the manager lacks the expertise required.
- Make sure everyone understands and follows the clear communication and reporting lines. This provides a point of escalation if there are complaints or something doesn't work as it should.
- Implement and arrange follow-up monitoring of reasonable adjustments in conjunction with HR staff and direct supervisors.
- Follow the organisation's policies and procedures, such as the health and safety policy.
- Communicate regularly with:
  - the staff member requiring the support
  - HR staff and senior management
  - people who conduct assessments and provide recommendations
  - other stakeholders involved in actioning tasks, such as people in charge of ordering or setting up new equipment.
- Monitor completion according to the dates agreed to in the plan.
- Sign off on decisions and task completion to the agreed quality.

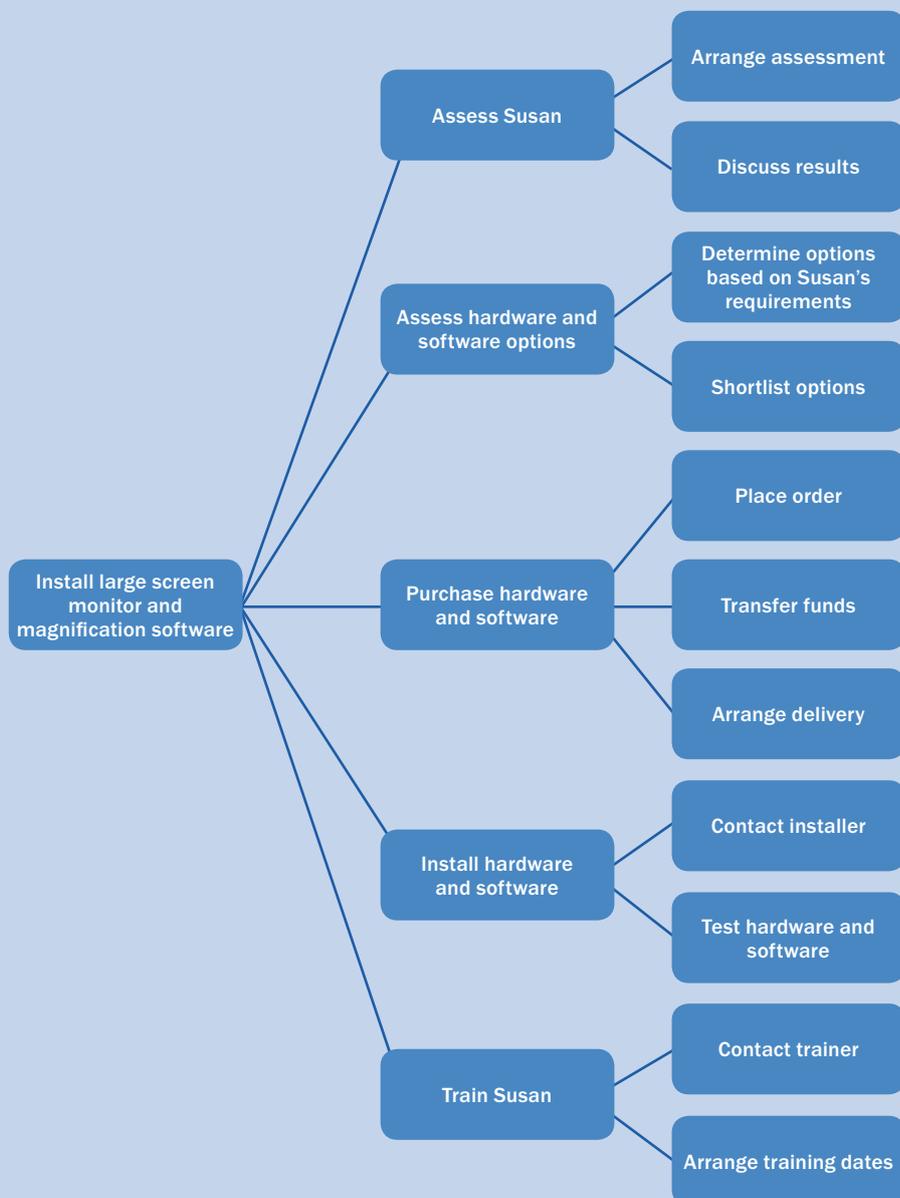
JobAccess provides resources for managers, including a reasonable adjustment checklist that outlines the process from receiving a request through to its implementation. This can be accessed at: <http://aspirelr.link/reasonable-adjustment-policy-checklist>.

Example

## Steps for implementing adjustments

Susan has albinism which means she has decreased clarity of vision and an intolerance of bright light. Her workplace installs a large screen monitor and magnification software, and has created a low-light internal space from which Susan can work. Susan also uses an antiglare filter on her monitor.

Susan's manager followed this process when implementing adjustments for her.



## Accessing additional support

*Managers will require input from others to deliver support to staff with disability.*

Depending on the nature of the support required and the policies and procedures of your organisation, you may need to defer some strategies and decisions to offer support to others. Larger organisations may have employees whose role is to assist managers in determining reasonable adjustments.

Smaller organisations would be unlikely to have such a dedicated role. It may be the manager's responsibility or they may engage external stakeholders to assist in the implementation process. You would need to liaise closely with an external individual or organisation, and require them to report to you or another manager responsible.

External individuals or organisations you may engage include:

- specialist HR companies
- IT or software experts
- installers or technicians
- diversity trainers
- allied health professionals
- health and safety officers
- workplace assessors.

Some of these services may be arranged and funded through the NDIS where eligible employees are assisted because it enables them to participate in the workforce.

The following outlines examples of how reasonable adjustments or supports could be provided.

Reasonable adjustment	Role of manager	Other supports to be sourced
<b>Appointing a work buddy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranging for help through JobAccess</li> <li>• Appointing a buddy to act as a mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for mentoring, coaching and general and specific job assistance</li> <li>• Training and support for the staff member</li> </ul>
<b>Modifications to work practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with HR</li> <li>• Check on precise start and finish times as well as breaks throughout the day</li> <li>• Start and finish meetings on time</li> <li>• Notify of any changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase software applications to assist with scheduling</li> <li>• Reminders of tasks and timelines</li> </ul>
<b>Modifications to equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange to move the workstation to a quieter area in the office that is free from background noise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get external contractors to install sound-absorbing panels for the workstation</li> <li>• Have IT team install the required software applications and conduct a training session on how to use the apps</li> </ul>

## Advising staff

*When providing supports each staff member involved must be properly advised of their role and the expectations around that.*

Advising staff of their role in providing support to others with disability is an important part of fulfilling the goals agreed to with the staff member in need of support. Staff who are assisting with providing support should be involved throughout the process, and should be given updates and information as required. However, exactly what information is shared with others must be controlled and, if possible, communicated by the person with disability.

<b>Steps for advising staff of their responsibilities</b>
1. Describe the impact the disability has on the staff member concerned.
2. Explain the support being requested and the responsibilities of the staff who will implement it.
3. Discuss the knowledge, skills and experience required to fulfil the role.
4. Establish expectations of support to be provided.
5. Discuss how support will be monitored and measured to determine its effectiveness.
6. Establish any training and development required.
7. Establish time frames to begin delivering support.

## Implementing workplace arrangements

*There are several actions you can take to raise awareness about disability and the supports available to staff.*

<b>Strategies you may choose to implement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure the engagement of staff with disability to understand what the business is doing well and what can be done to improve the situation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build awareness amongst staff by promoting success stories, events and initiatives (ensure you have the permission of the staff member concerned before sharing personal details).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share ideas and experiences from other businesses that promote the removal of employment barriers for people with disability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise disability awareness training for staff.</li> </ul>

Training sessions in diversity, inclusion and disability awareness may be arranged by management. This may be conducted inhouse by existing staff, such as staff from a specialist department, or by external consultants who may be employed to implement the adjustments.

Training sessions may cover the following topics:

- understanding the legislative framework and employer responsibilities
- understanding what it means to be discriminated against because of disability
- understanding the barriers faced by people with disability and how to remove or help staff overcome these barriers
- understanding what it means to be inclusive in both actions/behaviour and communication
- understanding the concept of a person-centred approach.

For staff training, raising awareness may involve a staff member with disability communicating directly to their team and other staff they interact with about their experience in the workplace. Such an approach must come from the person themselves with the support of their manager.

Your role as a manager is to facilitate the communication and ensure that learning takes place. Discussion can explore the staff member's perspective and suggestions for improvements that can be made. The purpose of the sessions should be for staff to think differently about how to engage, communicate and work with their colleague so that everyone can do their job to the best of their ability.

Here is an overview of the topics that could be covered:

#### **Communication**

- Barriers to communication
- Improvements in ways to communicate and maintain a conversation
- How disability can affect thinking and reasoning
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and why this is effective

#### **Modified equipment and assistive technologies**

- Examples of modifications and what they can enable the person to achieve
- Examples of assistive technologies and how they make a difference
- Changes to work practices that allow modifications to be used
- AAC devices that can aid communication

#### **Flexible work options**

- Modifications to a working day to make tasks more manageable
- The impact of disability on work schedules, completion of tasks, etc.

### Cognitive and work tools

- Strategies that assist with work
- Tools that assist with mental processing, such as memory and concentration

## Staff providing direct support

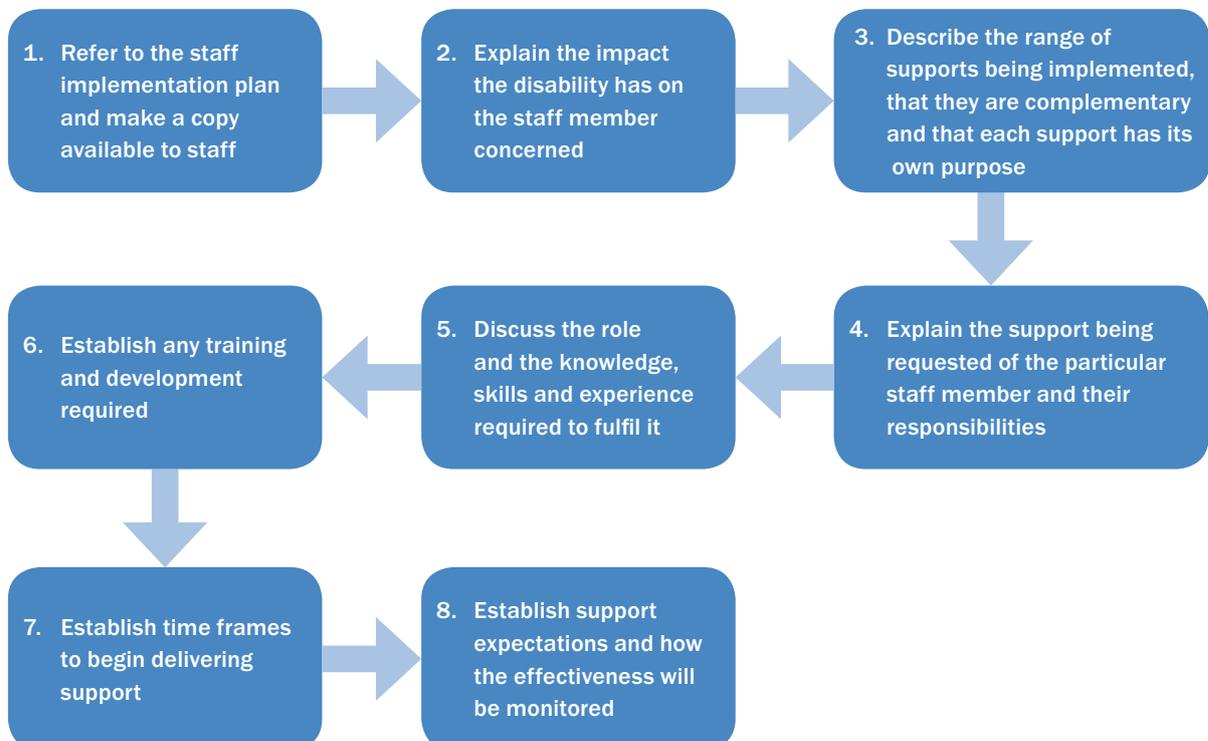
*You may need to clarify the role of staff who provide support to others.*

The capacity of the organisation to provide support will depend on the skills and expertise of the manager and their staff. Position descriptions may need to have duties and responsibilities altered to include these new roles and responsibilities.

Direct support provided by employees to staff with disability may include:

- offering additional training on adjusting work tasks
- assisting with physical supports to enable staff with disability to navigate and move around the workplace, or to operate equipment or set up their workstation
- being a workplace buddy and providing:
  - learning support and guidance
  - work routine guidance
  - assistance with keeping on top of tasks.

The following steps can be used when advising staff of their support role.



## Example

## Making workplace arrangements

Mark is re-entering the workforce after recovering from an industrial accident. He is a qualified electrician who fell from a height when installing cables on an industrial building site. This gave him a sustained back injury resulting in paraplegia.

Mark now uses a wheelchair and will have a predominantly office-based role with occasional site visits to consult with clients. Mark's manager Karen has mapped out a plan to help Mark gradually return to work. This involves staggered re-entry where Mark will work on a part-time basis for up to 12 months until he establishes work routines and becomes more comfortable with the job role. Karen has decided to hire an external consulting company that will work closely with Mark for the first two months. During that time there will be a handover from the consultant to an internal employee, Philip. Philip is an experienced estimator who will act as Mark's work buddy on an ongoing capacity.

Karen, Mark and Philip have met several times to map out Philip's role. Karen has arranged for the consulting team to train Philip in supporting Mark and will provide ongoing mentoring to Philip over the next two years.

Karen has also contracted consultants to provide specialist advice for fitting out worksite bunkhouses that will cater for Mark's needs onsite and for supplying Mark's office site with the equipment he needs.



## Practice task 6

### Question 1

Which of the following statements relate to additional support or reasonable adjustments for staff with disability? Select all that apply.

- Follow policies and procedures that mention diversity, inclusion and reasonable adjustment.
- Implement the supports as they are stated in the plan because it will not be reviewed or changed once implementation begins.
- Explain a person's additional supports to the whole organisation via the organisation's newsletter or intranet.
- Check in with the staff member who has disability to monitor the effectiveness of the adjustments and modifications.

## Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 7 in the order you would follow to discuss the support role with a staff member.

- Establish any training and development required.
- Establish expectations of support to be provided.
- Describe the impact the disability has on the staff member concerned.
- Establish time frames to begin delivering support.
- Discuss the knowledge, skills and experience required to fulfil the role.
- Explain the support being requested and the responsibilities of the staff who will implement it.
- Discuss how support will be monitored and measured to determine its effectiveness.

## Question 3

Which of the following statements is a reason a manager would refer to an outside organisation to provide additional supports? Select all that apply.

- It is more cost-effective to have the support implemented by an external provider.
- The staff member's organisation lacks the skills and experience to provide the support.
- The government's Employment Assistance Fund requires additional support to be provided.
- The staff member with disability has requested it.

# 3B

## Monitoring the effectiveness of supports

*The ongoing effectiveness of supports must be monitored and adjusted accordingly.*

In some circumstances the nature of a person's disability can change over time and the supports that are put in place may not be as effective. The person with disability should be encouraged to come forward if supports are not working and if changes are required. This will require a review of current supports and a determination if additional supports are needed.

### Gathering feedback

*Feedback is one of the best ways to source information.*

When you request feedback it shows you want to ensure systems are effective and are willing to monitor and follow up on programs.

The starting point for gathering feedback is to reflect on the purpose and goals of the modifications or adjustments that were implemented in the first place. You may prepare some specific questions you would like answers to, such as:

- Have the inherent requirements of the job changed?
- Has the nature or the impact of the disability changed?
- What were the expectations or desired outcomes, and have these been achieved?
- What has worked well?
- What has not worked well?
- How well has the staff member been performing over time?
- What changes are required in the supports, particularly in terms of career advancement and the acquisition of new skills and experiences?



Methods of gathering feedback include:

- questionnaires
- interviews
- job performance data (if relevant)
- medical reports
- functional capacity reports.

Whichever method is used for gathering feedback, the privacy and dignity of the staff member should always be maintained.

## Making changes to strategies and supports

*Changes must be driven by the needs of the staff member and the effectiveness of existing support arrangements.*

Once feedback has been received, discuss the findings with the staff member. You may need to redraft an implementation plan based on feedback.

When examining the plan, you should consider:

- continuing with current support
- whether any support that is ineffective should be stopped altogether
- adding any additional support.

Steps to take when reviewing supports:

- Ensure the review dates are identified and adhered to.
- Ensure the review has a future focus – what work can the staff member with disability reasonably expect to do in the next 6-12 months? This ensures supports under consideration are focused in the future as well as the present.
- Make sure the staff member's feedback and preferences remain central to any decisions about new supports and changes to existing supports.

As with the original implementation plan, the revised plan should detail resource requirements, costs, time lines and review dates. It may include a summary of the changes and adjustments to roles and responsibilities.

### Example

## Monitoring the effectiveness of supports

Paulina works in an aged care facility as a nursing assistant. Last year she found herself becoming increasingly tired at work, both physically and mentally, and was later diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Following the diagnosis Paulina met with her manager and other senior staff to discuss what adjustments could be made in the workplace. Paulina was given more administrative and less physically demanding tasks to do. Her hours were also changed so that she was only required to work in the mornings. The workplace adjustments were captured in a report and implemented.



Two weeks ago Paulina and her manager met to review her current work situation. The manager asked how she was coping with the various tasks of her job and how her diagnosis was impacting this.

Paulina's symptoms have changed and her sight is now being affected as well. Her fatigue levels fluctuate from week to week, sometimes requiring Paulina to use a mobility aid.

Paulina and her manager consider the following options:

- Paulina will have fewer screen-based tasks when her vision is compromised.
- Paulina's workspace will be moved closer to amenities such as the bathroom.
- Paulina will have greater flexibility in her working hours.
- Paulina and her manager will review the processes that she uses at work.

Paulina and her manager sign off on the new support implementation plan. Her manager arranges for the changes to be implemented that week.



## Practice task 7

### Question 1

Which of the following are key questions to consider when reviewing the effectiveness of supports? Select all that apply.

- Has all the support paperwork been completed?
- Have the inherent requirements of the job changed?
- Has the nature or impact of the disability changed?
- Have all supplier invoices been paid?
- From the staff member's perspective, what has and has not worked with each support?

### Question 2

Which of the following statements relating to feedback and support are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- a) The feedback from the person receiving support is the most essential type of feedback. \* Yes    \* No
- b) Revised implementation plans should detail changed resource requirements, costs and time lines. \* Yes    \* No
- c) Everyone in the organisation should be asked to provide feedback when reviewing the effectiveness of supports. \* Yes    \* No
- d) Feedback should be reviewed every 12 months to allow enough time for supports to be fully implemented and tested. \* Yes    \* No



## Summary

- The organisation's policies and procedures for implementing supports should be followed.
- The manager and other stakeholders such as HR must understand their role in relation to implementing and reviewing supports. This must be made clear to the staff member seeking support.
- Managers need to understand their own limitations when providing support and seek the assistance of other providers and experts when required.
- Managers have a responsibility to clearly advise staff on their role in providing support.
- The implementation of supports should follow what was agreed to with the staff member requiring support, as documented in the implementation plan.
- Managers should use an appropriate method to gather feedback on the effectiveness of supports and must involve the staff member receiving support when doing so.
- When support changes are being considered, the changes should be documented in a new implementation plan signed by the manager and the staff member receiving support.



## Learning checkpoint 3

# Implementing support needs for staff

### Part A

1. Which of the following statements describe why managers should follow protocols, policies and procedures for implementing supports? Select all that apply.
  - They provide consistency and a fair and transparent process.
  - They provide formal agreement on the types of supports and when they will be implemented.
  - Failure to follow policies will result in a breach of legislation.
  - They provide an escalation point or point of appeal for the staff member if they believe the process has not been followed.
2. Which of the following are ways to work with staff who provide support to others? Select all that apply.
  - Provide them with copies of the implementation plan and as much documentation as they need to understand disability.
  - Provide information of the impact of disability on a person's ability to do their job.
  - Discuss the knowledge, skills and experience they need to fulfil the role.
  - Provide additional training if required to help them in their support role.

### Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

#### Case study

Michael has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following his service in the military. He has transitioned to civilian life and finds it difficult to hold down regular work. He recently started working in the auto parts division of a large car dealership. This suits Michael given his background as a mechanic in the army. However, his health condition means he sometimes re-experiences the trauma and can have periods of increasingly negative thoughts.

Michael's manager Kinsley developed a reasonable adjustment implementation plan with him when Michael first started work. The plan included:

- allowing Michael to attend psychotherapy sessions offsite as recommended by Michael's GP
- allowing Michael flexible working conditions and hours
- allowing Michael to wear noise-cancelling headphones to reduce distractions
- pairing Michael up with a workplace buddy
- allowing Michael's case manager to come onsite to assist Michael with settling in to civilian working life
- providing instructions in writing for all the tasks Michael performs to aid his memory.

1. If Michael requests a support person from within the workplace, what information do they need to be given?

2. Identify **two** supports that are beyond the role of Kinsley as a manager?

3. Which stakeholders might provide valuable feedback to Kinsley and Michael when monitoring the effectiveness of Michael's supports?

4. In a review meeting, Michael and other stakeholders provide the following feedback:
  - Michael would like less phone contact with customers as he doesn't feel confident in dealing with conflict or complaints.
  - Walking through the spare parts division on the way to his office is triggering flashbacks that sometimes require him to leave work.
  - Michael is distressed to hear that he will be changing work buddies as his current support person is moving to another division in the organisation.

As Michael's manager, what are some of the changes in his current support plan that Kinsley could discuss with him?

