

Creating a flexible workplace

Having an agile and hybrid workplace will support an inclusive working environment, as it will remove many of the barriers that people face, and will improve wellbeing and productivity.

How could you improve your working environment?

1. Hub offices

Create fully accessible locations that welcome and inspire everyone to come together and work together.

2. Office space

Sensory-friendly office spaces will ensure equity of access to everyone which, leads to greater inclusion. Consider natural light, soft furnishings, quiet zones, allowing the use of headphones (either personal music or noise cancelling) and flexible dress codes that allow more people to feel comfortable in this environment.

3. Hot desk areas

Remember that one size doesn't fit all. People with different needs will need different work areas and equipment.

4. Remote working

Working from home, from other office spaces and multiple working locations should be supported for as many roles as possible. Think about tasks that can be managed and done remotely and don't need you to be in a specific location.

5. Balanced approach to conference calls and meetings

Ensure the Chair of the meeting:

- Includes everyone.
- Keeps to time.
- Keeps meetings short (for example, 50 minutes and not an hour, to allow for breaks in between meetings).
- Sets a clear agenda, purpose, expected outcomes and actions.
- Involves and includes people who aren't in the room just as much as those in the room.

6. Hours

- Consider flexible working hours.
- Minimise the use of zero hour contracts - it can have a serious psychological impact on focus and commitment.

7. Outcome-based tasks

- Manage results in a timely and supportive way to ensure clarity and understanding of expectations for everyone involved.
- Think about realistic timescales for outputs - are they reasonable based on needs?

8. Job sharing

Job sharing offers the benefit of being able to work collaboratively with someone with a similar skill set sharing responsibilities.

9. Technology

Get the right equipment for your business

- Use software and systems that assist with collaborative working. The technologies have improved hugely in recent years.
- Consider setting best practice in the use of video technology such as Zoom and Skype. This will include:
 - Use of captions to help understanding.
 - When to have cameras on or off.
 - Providing transcripts.
 - Asking permission to record.
 - Allowing people to walk about (you don't always have to be on screen).
 - Keeping meetings shorter.

Make it easy for people to get the basics

There is now a huge choice of equipment and assistive technologies that can help people do their job. This includes: keyboards, headphones, ergonomic mice, software for mind maps, virtual whiteboards, speech to text, alt text converters, colour screens, diary organisers, action lists, translation, home working desks and chairs, laptop raisers, wireless accessories, and more.

10. Inclusive design principles

Make sure that all processes, products and environments within the workplace are suited to all diverse characteristics, as shown in the links below and on the next page.

www.microsoft.com/design/inclusive/

More useful links and resources

BASE (British Association for Supported Employment)

www.base-uk.org

Free toolkit on employing people who are autistic

www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Certitude:

Support for people with learning disabilities and autistic people

www.certitude.london

A guide to making your emails accessible in Outlook

www.bit.ly/MicrosoftAccessible

Business Disability Forum

businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

ERSA (Employment Related Services Association)

ersa.org.uk

Genius Within - supporting neurodiverse workplaces

www.geniuswithin.co.uk

Gov.UK website

www.gov.uk

For more information on taking the next steps to becoming a more inclusive employer, please contact us by emailing RWA@seeability.org