



Human
Resources

POCKET GUIDE

A photograph of two people in an office setting, overlaid with a red tint. A man with a beard is sitting in a chair on the left, and a woman is sitting in a chair on the right, facing him. They appear to be in a conversation. The background shows office furniture and a window with blinds.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

A guide for managers on how to support
disabled staff in the School



Introduction

The School's reasonable adjustment duty is fundamental to creating an inclusive, safe and supportive environment for all staff. This pocket guide takes managers through a good practice approach to discussing, agreeing, implementing and reviewing reasonable adjustments. Employees who are anticipating a discussion about reasonable adjustments may also find this guidance useful in helping them to know what to expect. As well as general advice, this document also includes further detail on different types of adjustment as well as specific considerations that, as a manager, you may wish to take into account to help you to manage particular situations and conditions.

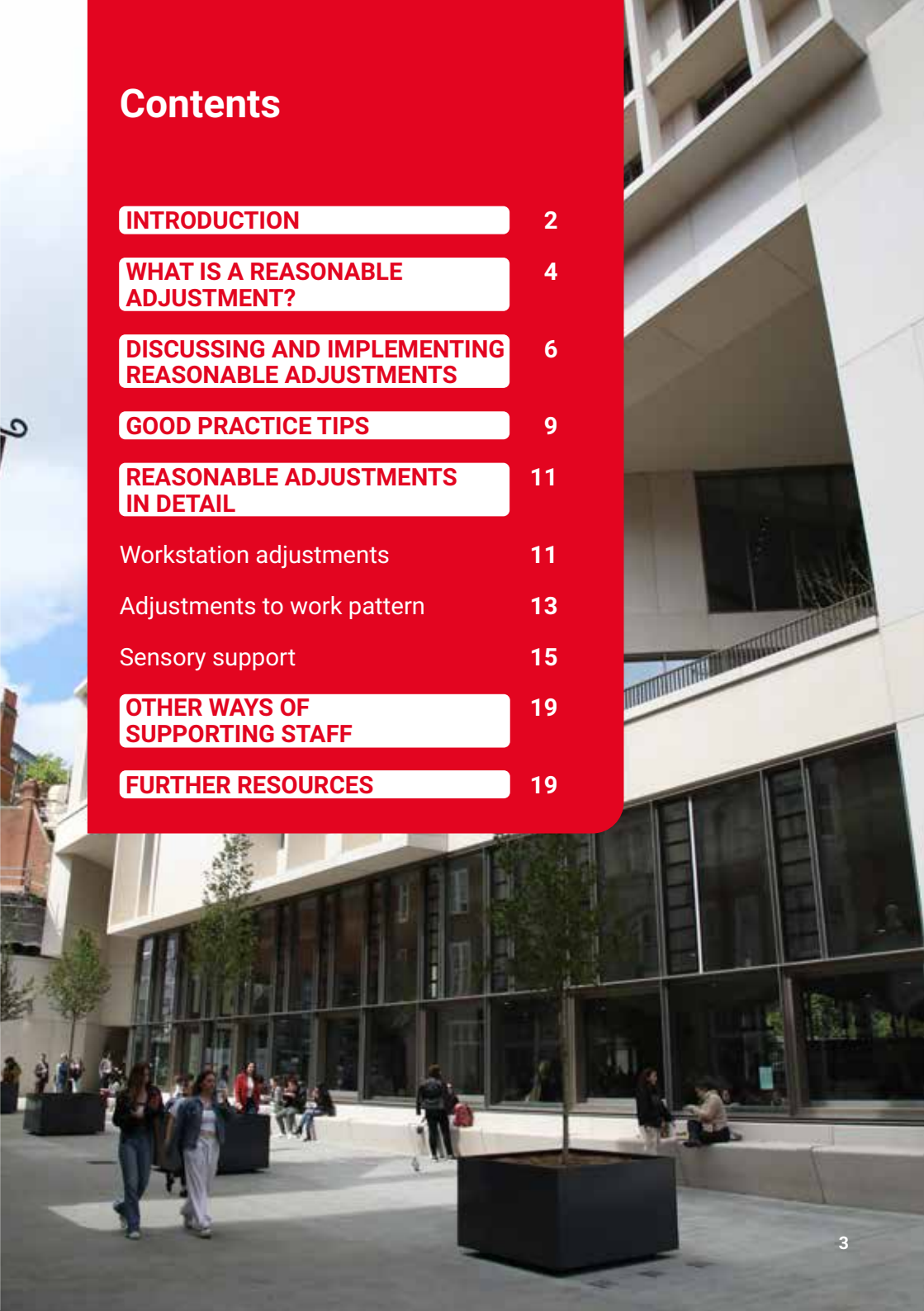
This pocket guide incorporates good practice approaches as recommended by the [Business Disability Forum](#) (of which the School is a member) among other sources of support for disabled individuals. It should not be relied upon as a lone tool for addressing disability in the workplace. As a manager, you should also make use of the other available resources (including the Reasonable Adjustment Flowcharts) as well as contacting your HR Partner if you are unsure about how to address or manage a particular condition. In particular, you should be ready to be proactive - in conjunction with support from HR - in seeking expert advice, (such as via an Occupational Health referral) and, where appropriate, exploring different funding options (such as via Access to Work).

This pocket guide is one of a number of guides that summarise the information and resources available on important HR topics. For further information about supporting disabled staff at LSE, please see the [Disability Policy](#).



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What is a reasonable adjustment?

It is easy to think that treating everybody fairly means treating them the same. However, because of the barriers that disabled people face, as an employer the School has a legal obligation to treat disabled people more favourably to enable them to work effectively and productively – this is the essence of making a reasonable adjustment. Adjustments either remove or reduce the effect of barriers so that disabled staff can flourish at work.

It's important to note that what is 'reasonable' (or most appropriate) may vary depending upon the circumstances. In particular, consider whether a potential adjustment:

- Will remove or reduce the disadvantage for the individual with the disability
- Is practical to make
- Is affordable (taking into account both funding available through the School and external sources, such as Access to Work)
- Could harm the health and safety of others.

Some reasonable adjustments might be more suitable for some circumstances (and conditions) than others. The following list is not exhaustive but should give you an idea of the different means that are available to support employees.

- Making reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process (such as providing extra time during an interview or assessment)
- Making reasonable adjustments to the physical environment, eg, widening a doorway or building a ramp
- Exploring flexible working hours, either on a long-term or more temporary basis, for example changes to start/finish times, additional breaks, working from home
- Acquiring or modifying equipment, eg, providing an adapted keyboard
- Providing assistive software, as required for the role (such as speech-to-text software)
- Where possible, providing information in alternative accessible formats (such as large print, audio or Braille)
- In the case of academic and teaching staff, scheduling classes and/or rooms appropriately so that the needs of both students and the academic can be met as far as reasonably possible
- In the case of an academic, making reasonable adjustments to their role (such as flexible working hours) that allow them to focus on all core elements of the role, ie, teaching, research and citizenship.



- Supporting employees who become disabled, or whose disability leads to an absence from work, with a phased return (eg, working flexible hours)
- Providing furniture, such as a specific chair or desk to support an employee with a physical disability
- Providing additional management support (eg, one-to-ones) to an employee who has a mental health condition
- Providing an employee with a support worker, eg, a sign language interpreter or reader
- Allowing an individual with dyslexia more time to undertake a test for an interview
- Reorganising minor or subsidiary pieces of work within the team
- Transferring someone to a suitable alternative vacancy
- Providing additional training or mentoring to support someone in being able to use equipment or access existing provisions
- Modifying existing procedures or processes to ensure that a disabled member of staff does not suffer a disadvantage
- Agreeing reasonable breaks during the working day, eg, for an employee with diabetes who needs to eat regularly
- Allowing staff time off to attend medical appointments.

As a line manager, you have a key role to play in supporting staff in a way which is appropriate to their circumstances, their role and the requirements of the team. You are not alone in this responsibility and you should make use of the support and advice available within the School. In particular, decisions about reasonable adjustments for staff should be made in conjunction with input from your HR Partner.

While adjustments are often intended to support an individual in undertaking the core requirements of their role, they should not normally replace or discard those requirements. For example, while a disabled employee could be given more time to undertake a piece of work, it would not usually be considered reasonable to remove the need for that piece of work to be undertaken – unless it can be reallocated and replaced with other work at a similar level. Speak with your HR Partner if you aren't sure whether a particular adjustment would qualify as "reasonable".



Discussing and implementing reasonable adjustments

■ Having the conversation

As a manager, there are a number of ways in which you could become aware that someone in your team has a disability: it could be as part of the induction process for a new starter, an employee could share this during a catch-up, it could be revealed through internal assessment (such as the workstation assessment coordinated by the Health and Safety team), or you could learn of it via a third party (eg, an HR Partner). Be aware that you also have a responsibility to be reasonably aware of possible health conditions and to address these accordingly, regardless of whether or not an employee has decided to share anything with you. Whatever form this sharing of information takes, your first step should be to meet with the employee for a supportive and collaborative conversation about what adjustments could support them in their role and during their time with the School in general.

If you're unsure how to approach this conversation, or have questions arising from a discussion you've recently had with someone in your team, contact your HR Partner. Depending on the circumstances, you may also seek additional advice or support from other areas of the School (eg, DTS) or external experts (eg, via an Occupational Health referral).

Above all, approach the conversation sympathetically – whilst you may not get everything right first time, you should aim to constructively discuss what the employee's needs may be and what measures might most suitably meet those needs.

If the employee has only recently acquired their disability or you and the employee are unsure what adjustments are appropriate, further discussions may be necessary as both of you learn over time what adjustments work best. It's also possible that the employee doesn't yet have a formal diagnosis for their condition. In these circumstances, it's important that you continue to support the employee during what can be a difficult time and manage accordingly, for example appreciating that the employee's performance might be affected by stress or anxiety and taking this into account when you discuss work objectives. Alternatively, if the employee has been living with a disability for a long time, they may have considerable knowledge about their condition as well as a clear idea of what their needs are. In this instance, the employee may be able to provide existing information from medical personnel or other specialists who are already working with them, in addition to any new input which may be sought.



As a manager, you should be open, responsive, and willing to trial different arrangements in order to properly support the employee. Remember that adjustment needs may be very individual. For example, two people with the same diagnosis may have different needs depending on their role and how the condition impacts them personally. You might also discuss what information the employee feels comfortable sharing with colleagues, at the same time appreciating that not everyone will feel comfortable doing so.

Keep in mind that people might use different terminology to refer to themselves and any condition(s) they may have, and these terms may change over time.

■ Agreeing and implementing the adjustment

HR have developed a series of flowcharts for managers and staff that set out both the overall process for reasonable adjustments as well as more detailed processes for particular types of adjustment (such as workstation adjustments or sensory support). You may find it helpful to refer to these to understand the process to be followed.

Where specialist advice is required (in particular an Occupational Health referral), this should typically be with the employee's agreement. Your HR Partner can advise you on how make the referral. If there is a delay in specialist advice being obtained (for example if a disability has only recently become apparent), you should work with the employee to explore appropriate and reasonable options to support them until such advice has been received. Again, your HR Partner can support you here.

You should also agree when the adjustment will be reviewed - in many cases, this will be informed by information from Occupational Health. Of course, asking how the employee is may well become a natural part of your catch-ups and one-to-one meetings, but you should also agree some dedicated time to discuss with the employee whether the adjustment is meeting their needs and (if not) what changes might help.

Once an adjustment has been agreed it should be implemented without undue delay. In all cases, it's very important that the employee is kept updated about what is happening.



■ Reviewing the adjustment

Reasonable adjustments are not set in stone and you should expect to review them periodically. When putting the adjustments in place, discuss with the employee what would be a reasonable review period and what this will include. You must agree these reviews in advance with the employee and they should be fully involved during the review itself. Sometimes the timing of a review is determined by circumstances (eg, if the employee's personal circumstances and/or role change). Where the arrangement is working well, a "review" could simply be a brief discussion with the employee, either in a regular one-to-one or separately, to see whether anything else could be helpful.

Reviews should aim to identify the most appropriate support for the employee – taking into account both the initial assessment as well as any changes that have occurred in the intervening period – and they should be constructive, with the aim of minimising uncertainty and/or distress.

As with all other aspects of the reasonable adjustment process, your HR Partner can provide guidance and advice about undertaking reviews.

■ Change of line manager

It is very important that disabled individuals can be confident that any agreed adjustments will stay even if their line manager changes. If you anticipate a change of role, you should discuss this with the individual and agree a handover with the incoming manager so that the employee's support is not interrupted.





Good Practice Tips

Whatever the specifics of an individual case, here are some good practice tips that apply for all discussions about reasonable adjustments and disability support.

■ Be prepared

Reasonable adjustments can be a sensitive topic to discuss, but it's vital that you don't shy away from the discussion. Take the time to prepare – above all, make sure that you're familiar with the School's Disability Policy and contact your HR Partner if you're unsure about any part of it. You should also sign up to the School's training for managers, which includes specific training workshops and sessions that focus on tips and strategies to conduct sensitive or difficult conversations.

■ Be proactive

As a general principle, as a manager you should aim to be proactive in raising and addressing any issues or concerns. At the same time, make sure that you don't prejudge the employee's requirements. Remember that someone who has been living with a disability for a long time may have considerable knowledge about their condition as well as a clear idea of adjustments that would work best for them. It's important that their views are central to any discussions and that they feel that any concerns they have are being treated seriously. You should also be open to the possibility that an unshared disability may be a factor in how someone works and/or behaves (for example if there are performance issues) – if you think that this might be the case, it's important that you provide the employee with the opportunity to raise and discuss this if they feel comfortable doing so.

■ There is no one-size-fits-all solution

Just because someone has a particular condition, it doesn't mean that they'll need the same adjustments as someone else with the same condition. Discuss with the employee the barriers they're experiencing and work together to identify adjustments that will help. You may need to seek expert advice on what's possible and the most effective adjustment(s) – but the first step should always be talking with the employee to see if they have ideas about what they might need. Above all, don't make assumptions or impose adjustments that the individual does not want.

■ Adjustments shouldn't be prescriptive

Don't impose adjustments unilaterally. Ask the employee what they need and – where reasonable – try to provide them what they're asking for. Contact your HR Partner if you are unsure.



■ Use experts

Line managers aren't expected to be disability experts. At times, you'll need help from an expert to work out precisely what sort of adjustment is needed. Not all disabled people will know exactly what adjustments they need – especially if they've only recently been diagnosed – and the adjustment process can be an opportunity for you (with help from specialists) to help them work it out.

■ Try to resolve any differences early

Staff may use the School's grievance procedures if they wish to make a complaint related to reasonable adjustments (or any other aspect of their employment with the School). At the same time, while these formal procedures may well be appropriate in some cases, most issues concerning disabled staff may be addressed effectively and efficiently through early management intervention which prevents unnecessary escalation.

■ Review and revise

Any and all adjustments that are agreed should be reviewed on a timetable which you've agreed in writing with the employee and, where necessary, revised accordingly. As before, you may need to seek additional expertise to ensure that any revisions to the support are appropriate to the changing needs.



Reasonable adjustments in detail

This section provides some extra detail on different types of reasonable adjustments – it is by no means definitive and should be used alongside the Disability Policy and other written resources, as well as advice (including medical information) from within and outside the School as required. The section includes flowcharts to illustrate the process for exploring, agreeing and implementing different types of adjustment; please speak with your HR Partner if you are unsure how to proceed.

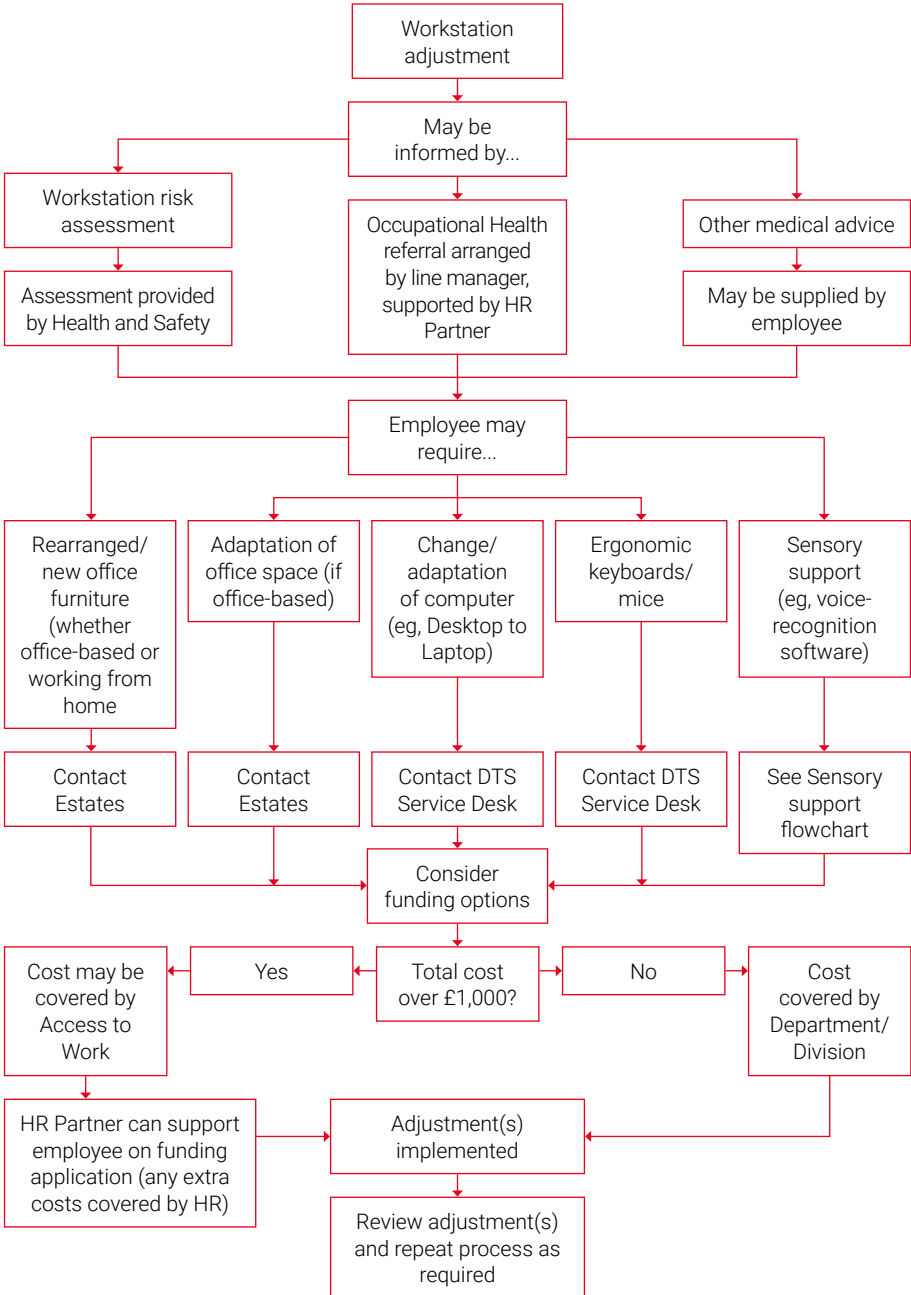
■ Workstation adjustments

Workstation adjustments involve making physical changes to the employee's work environment. Depending on what is recommended by the available information, these could include: arranging a more ergonomic chair for the employee (or another piece of office furniture), changing the equipment they use for their role (such as replacing a desktop computer with a laptop), or otherwise adapting their work area. Health and Safety's workstation assessment may help to identify necessary adjustments. Where further information is required, a referral via Occupational Health can help to shed more light on the nature of the employee's condition.





Reasonable adjustments flowchart: workstation adjustments





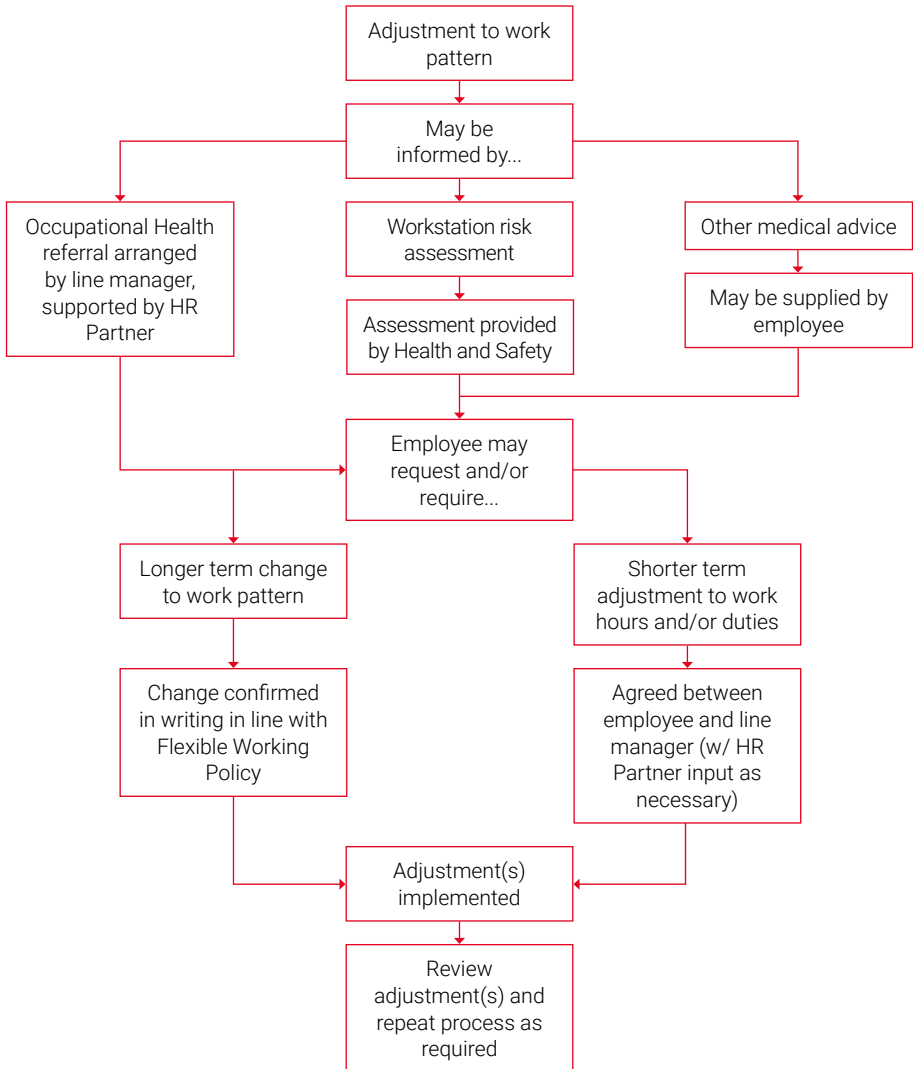
■ Adjustments to work pattern

Sometimes, fairly simple adjustments to when, where and how an employee works can go a long way to removing any potential barriers they may be facing – for example, agreeing amended hours so that they can attend medical appointments related to their disability. The School's **Flexible Working Toolkit** and **Policy** are helpful for exploring what alterations to a work pattern could look like in practice. Depending on the circumstances, you could also agree with the employee on a shorter term or more fluid approach – for example, where they can work from home at short notice depending on the acuity of their condition at a given time, or where they work variable hours in different weeks. Also, keep in mind that rigid working hours can be a barrier to people with conditions that have a fluctuating impact at different times and might impact their wellbeing and/or productivity.





Reasonable adjustments flowchart: adjustments to work pattern





■ Sensory support

The sorts of conditions that often require additional sensory support are often labelled as “neurodivergent”. This label can cover a wide range of personal circumstances, and a discussion about reasonable adjustments is likely to be informed by medical advice that can help to focus on the sorts of arrangements that will work best for the individual concerned.

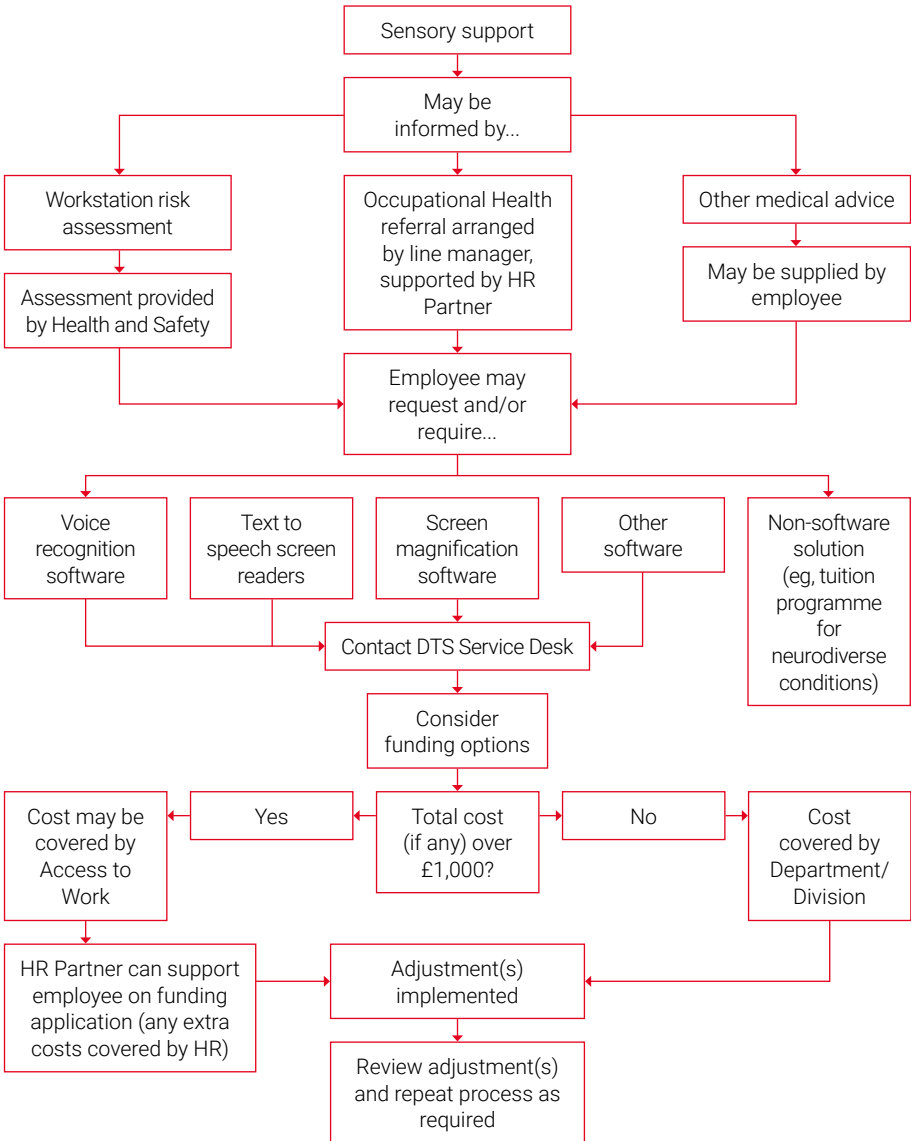
Routine and structure can be barriers for neurodivergent people for a number of reasons. Some people may have set routines that they rely on and will struggle to work in any other way. You may think that they are being inflexible, but even seemingly minor changes to established routines can be very distressing for them.

For others, inflexible processes and tight deadlines will be a challenge. They might feel very anxious or unable to work effectively with a deadline looming. Rigid working hours can be a barrier to people with conditions that have a fluctuating impact at different times.





Reasonable adjustments flowchart: sensory support





■ Focusing on neurodivergence: what you can do as a manager

These days, there's a greater awareness of how neurodivergent conditions (such as autism) influence how someone responds to and interacts within a work environment. While line managers are not expected to be experts in managing neurodivergence, here a few tips for how you can make sure that your team is welcoming, supportive and enabling.

Be clear

When someone new joins your team, be open and clear about the routines and structures that are already in place – formal and informal. Let them know that you're open to discussing how these could potentially be amended so that the right support is in place for the employee. This may require you to assess frankly the routines and structures that are in place in your team. Sometimes, long-established processes can go unnoticed because you've been working with them for a long time – for example, receiving agenda papers for a meeting at late notice can be stressful for individuals with certain neurodivergent conditions, so you may wish to review this approach if it's previously been an accepted practice in the team.

Be flexible

Let people set their own structures and routines, where it's reasonably possible. What is "reasonable" will depend on the role, and there will be some roles for which it isn't reasonable to allow this – for example, if certain routines and structures are in place for health and safety reasons, or if other colleagues rely on things being done a certain way. Your HR Partner can provide support and advice here.

Equally, there will be some roles where flexibility in routine and structures is perfectly reasonable and may, in fact, be an improvement. This could be if, for example, a routine is established without any particular reason beyond being "the way that it's always been done", and it won't have a disproportionate impact on the team to change it.

Keep them in the loop

Make sure that any changes to workplace routines (eg, different/finish start times or changes to shift patterns) are communicated as early as possible.

Review regularly

Check in regularly with your team. Make sure that you're open to feedback about what is and isn't working for them, and that you'll support them by making whatever changes you can to help them.



■ Hypersensitivity

Some people find too much sensory information overwhelming – this is sometimes called “hypersensitivity”. Stimuli could include:

- Lighting, eg, fluorescent lighting in the office
- Patterned carpets and walls
- Background chatter, especially in an open-plan office
- Strong smells, such as fragrances or chemicals
- Noise from computers and other technology
- Different textures.

If an employee shares that they are hypersensitive, you should ask them what the causes are. Remember that these will vary from person to person and from place to place – what’s fine for one person may cause another person to feel overwhelmed, and that same person might feel very different in one place compared to another.

■ Hyposensitivity

Some people can also be “hyposensitive”, which means that they’re less sensitive to sensory stimuli. This means that they might not be able to hear or distinguish certain sounds such as speech, or feel pain in the way you might expect.

■ Some common adjustments

Naturally, your first step should be an open and honest discussion with the employee – they’ll be able to tell you what sort of sensory sensitivities they have, and what would help.

Some of the more common adjustments for individuals with sensitivity to sensory stimuli include:

- Quieter working areas (working some of the time from home can be helpful here);
- Making changes to the physical environment, such as replacing fluorescent lighting with alternatives or installing flexible lighting
- Flexible hours, such as working from home during busier times
- Considering the amount of visible information in the office – for example, having word clouds on the walls can be overwhelming for some people
- Changed hours (eg, starting/finishing earlier) to avoid busier times of the day
- Sharing the employee’s routine with the rest of the team (if they agree).
- Putting rules in place to avoid crosstalk in meetings

If the employee is hyposensitive, they may benefit from alternative ways of communicating – such as speech-to-text software if they struggle to distinguish speech. Potential solutions can be discussed by contacting the DTS Service Desk.



Other ways of supporting staff

As well as supporting with suitable reasonable adjustments, you should also know how to signpost disabled staff to the other wellbeing resources available within the School, including:

- The **Mental Health First Aiders' Network**: the School has a network of over 200 volunteers, each trained to understand the factors that can affect mental health. The Network is supported by a number of **Mental Health Staff Champions** who act as local champions in promoting a positive culture around mental health and wellbeing at LSE.
- The School's **Staff Counselling** service, which can be contacted at 020 7955 6953 (or just extension 6953) or at **staff.counselling@lse.ac.uk**
- The **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**: all staff can access trained counsellors and support specialists. The EAP can be contacted in confidence by calling 0800 107 6147 (quoting LSE as the name of the employer) or accessing the online portal by visiting **www.colleaguesupport.co.uk** (entering code 206011 as the username and password).
- The **Business Disability Forum** website includes a range of resources for employers (and by extension managers), including factsheets on different conditions and suggested adjustments. Please contact your HR Partner if you would like to know more.

Further resources

This pocket guide is one of a number of resources to support managers and staff in managing disability and in ensuring that disabled staff can play a full role in the School. Managers should also consult the Disability Policy and other relevant policies as required. Both managers and staff are encouraged to provide feedback on these resources, for example via their **HR Partner** or the **Disability and Wellbeing Network (DAWN)**.



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