

The Same Chance Toolkit

A step by step guide to becoming an **autism friendly employer**



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Foreword

National Autism Charity AsIAM and hiring platform IrishJobs are calling on organisations across Ireland to offer the ‘same chance’ to autistic people - the same chance to get a job, the same chance to thrive in a career and the same chance to belong.

The “Same Chance Toolkit” provides employers with a step by step guide to help them support the recruitment of autistic individuals.

This Toolkit will also provide guidance and support to employers around the Reasonable Accommodations and Workplace Supports which can help autistic employees to thrive at work, best practice around including autistic candidates at interviews and onboarding autistic employees.

Currently, there are at least 1 in 65 people in Ireland who are autistic, and many more who may be autistic, but may not have a formal diagnosis.

In recent years, there has been a greater understanding and awareness around autism across Ireland, but this hasn't always translated to better employment outcomes for the autism community.

Ireland has one of the lowest employment rates for people with disabilities in Europe, and is particularly stark for autistic people. As many as 80% of autistic people are unemployed or underemployed. There are many reasons why this is happening to so many autistic people.

Often the ways of working or recruitment we recognise may not always be receptive to autistic people's strengths or accommodating of their support needs, particularly at applications and interviews. Many autistic people also have worries about disclosing that they are autistic at work, or that telling employers would lead to being treated differently.

As workplaces evolve, in a post Covid-19 world our ways of working are becoming more flexible, accessible and inclusive. By diversifying the strengths of their workforce and by embracing autistic and neurodivergent individuals in their recruitment practices, organisations can also enhance their reputation with customers and the community.

Autistic individuals have skills and qualities that employers desire but may not have the same chance to showcase these skills as their neurotypical peers. However, when hired, autistic people can show that they are loyal, diligent, honest, and conscientious employees, who can really focus on the things they're interested in and who can develop dynamic, responsive, and innovative solutions.

But this isn't just about “doing the right thing”. Recruiting autistic and neurodivergent people, and empowering and supporting them to perform their best at work, is also good for business and can bring significant overall benefits to organisations who embrace these changes in the ways we work.



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1. Creating a more inclusive workplace



Creating a more inclusive workplace

- **Create a policy for recruiting autistic individuals and people with disabilities:** Make it clear to potential new recruits that you are an organisation which values diversity and inclusion, and you welcome all types of applicants - including applications from those from marginalised communities, including autistic and neurodivergent applicants.

- **Learn from others.** If similar size or larger organisations have experience in recruiting and working with autistic people, reach out to them and ask how they went about starting their journey.

- **Ask the experts:** Reach out to autistic-led organisations or organisations which support the recruitment of autistic people and ask them what they have learnt in this area. AsIAM's Training and Accreditation Department can provide online and in-person training on best practice on Autism Understanding and Acceptance and in developing a neurodiverse workplace culture. AsIAM's Adult and Employment Support Department can support your organisation to engage with the autistic community, and provide guidance and assistance with the recruitment of autistic individuals.

- **Mainstream autism-friendly recruitment practices** across your organisation's hiring and recruitment practices.

- **Create a workplace mentorship system,** preferably with people who have experience in working with autistic people.

- **Ensure that all hiring managers and mentors are trained in onboarding autistic individuals** and receive Autism Acceptance and Understanding Training and Disability Equality Training.

- **Engage with autistic individuals on what supports they might need,** such as adjustments to

their communication of their work duties, adjustments to any aspects of their role, if they need any additional support to structure and manage their working day, or regular stim breaks or movement breaks. The Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace section of this Toolkit can support your organisation to provide any accommodations or supports required.

- **Provide Autism Understanding and Acceptance Training** and Disability Equality Training to all staff.

- **Provide all new employees with an Onboarding Pack.** Include maps around the workplace location, information on who they will meet, their colleagues on the team, their line manager(s), dress codes and any aspects of the workplace culture that they need to know.

- **Don't overload the new autistic employee on their first day/week.** Maintain regular contact with the employee and offer any support when needed.

- **Ask for a review from people who have recently joined the organisation.** What did they like or not like about the recruitment process? Adjust practice/policy based on their feedback.

- **If applicable, offer a Remote Working policy.** Offer further opportunities to work remotely as a possible workplace support if an employee needs it.

- **Walk an autistic employee through any HR policies an organisation may have upon joining.** E.g. How to book annual leave, providing notice for sick leave, or any other leave provided by the organisation, etc. Ensure that any details that an employee needs to provide, such as their bank details, PPS number, etc, can be done so in an accessible manner.

2.

Attracting autistic talent



How to attract and recruit autistic talent

Recruitment strategies that organisations use can inadvertently disadvantage autistic candidates, and in some cases dissuade candidates from applying for the position even if they're qualified.

Throughout this guide you will find checklists to help you review your recruitment processes and suggest ways you can open up opportunities to neurodivergent people.

How to attract and recruit autistic talent checklist:

- **Research and facilitate possible Reasonable Accommodations** that your organisation could provide at work.
- **Conduct a Sensory Audit** and reduce any potentially distracting or overwhelming sensory stimuli that you may find in the workplace.
- **Ensure, where possible, that the organisation's policies and procedures reflect the diverse workforce** present and are accessible to everyone.
- **Try to make certain that autism-friendly recruitment practices have support** at management/executive level.
- **Screen your organisation's recruitment practices for unconscious bias.**
- **Seek out the support of autistic-led organisations**, as well as other organisations working in this field, for advice and guidance on recruiting autistic people. You can find some of these organisations in the "Employer Supports and Grants" section of this Toolkit.
- **Review the job description and advertisement to see what is needed in the role:** Try to separate what

requirements are essential for the role, and what skills or experience would be desirable to have. Try to judge candidates based on the essential requirements for the role where possible. Use plain English and clear, concise sentences throughout. Asking an autistic person to review the job advertisement and to incorporate their suggestions would be an ideal way to be inclusive of the autism community.

- **Engage with the autism community, particularly with autistic adults**, and advertise your jobs on hiring platform, IrishJobs. Let candidates know you welcome applications from neurodivergent people. Review the job description, using clear, unambiguous language throughout.

- **Educate hiring managers** on best practices for the recruitment of autistic people, neurodivergent people and neurotypical people.



3.

Conducting autism friendly interviews



Interview checklist

Before the Interview

- Inform the autistic candidate that they have been invited to interview.
- Send reminders to candidates in the lead up to the interview process and inform them who they will be meeting.
- Inform the candidate of your Accommodations policy.
- Send a structure of the interview process to the candidate and stick to it.
- Let the candidate know exactly where and when the interview will take place and who will be interviewing them.
- Give the interview questions or topics in advance.

During the Interview

- Ensure it is a competency based interview, don't focus on their body language/eye contact.
- Be clear and concise about what you communicate.
- Don't take it personally if an autistic person doesn't enjoy social conversation.
- Don't be offended if an autistic person might avoid shaking your hand or act differently than what you expect.

After the Interview

- Inform the candidate if they were successful or not at the agreed upon time.
- Give constructive feedback.
- If the candidate is successful, inform them of the next steps in the process, the timeline and who they can contact if they have any questions.

Guide to conducting an autism friendly interview

If we think of a process that is not autism friendly, we might often think of a job interview. Job interviews are intense, pressurised situations which can be stressful for everyone, but can be particularly stressful for many autistic people, as they are both tests of a person's 'soft skills' and their previous work and education experiences. These skills include having an ability to read body language and social cues, to communicate under pressure, and to convince interviewers that their skills and qualities are right for the position.

This makes the interview particularly demanding and stressful for many autistic people, particularly those who may communicate differently. Differences in understanding and interpretation between autistic and neurotypical people, which is known as the 'double empathy' problem, can also play a significant part in making interviews an arduous process for autistic people.

Many interview formats also use open-ended, indirect questions, like 'Tell me about yourself' or 'Where do you see yourself in five years' time?' This can make it harder for an autistic person to figure out what information the interviewer wants to hear from them. An autistic person may also interpret questions more literally, or give unexpected answers which may not always present themselves favourably to interviewers. Another issue is that many interview questions may ask a candidate to recall past situations which demonstrate their skills and experience. This can pose problems for some autistic people, who may have difficulties recalling situations, or having positive past work experiences to show to employers.

Executive functioning differences, which is the ability to plan and organise tasks, may also pose a barrier, as the interview format may make it more difficult for an autistic person to process questions, and to give a response that portrays a positive

impression of themselves and their skills.

While more autistic adults are supported to find the job they want, work to date has concentrated on coaching an autistic candidate to adapt their own characteristics or responses to suit employers' needs and to camouflage (or 'mask') more overt autistic traits. Whilst these strategies can be successful for some candidates, it does not address many of the barriers autistic people face at interviews.



The ideal interview

Here are some of our tips on how to conduct autism friendly interviews:

1. Factor autism, neurodiversity and disability into all stages of the recruitment process

One particular way the recruitment process can screen out autistic candidates is unconscious bias. Sometimes hiring decisions can inadvertently favour one person or group to the detriment of others. Unconscious bias can have a real impact on shaping an organisation's culture, and if unaddressed, can hinder your organisation's efforts to recruit, promote and retain autistic people, and in the long run, diverse workforce.

Many autistic people may often find themselves on the receiving end of these biases, which can often arise due to outdated perceptions around autism and disability. Bear in mind that autistic people are also more likely to be members of other minority groups who also experience unconscious bias (i.e. gender/gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, disability), and so this may compound the barriers they already experience. For these reasons, organisations should, where possible, take a holistic approach in their diversity & inclusion initiatives to address these barriers. There are a number of things your organisation can do to address unconscious bias, and build a diverse, inclusive workforce.

First, you can develop a standardised recruitment process. Second, your organisation can rework the language used in the job description to be clear, specific and concise and to include tasks which are directly connected to the job advertised.

Third, your organisation can set goals on how many autistic people and disabled people your organisation will recruit as part of wider diversity recruitment efforts, inviting autistic people and disabled people to an interview once they meet the role's essential requirements.

One further thing your organisation can do is to include a work sample. This can allow you to focus on how a candidate's skills may fit into the role. You can also adjust how you can adjudicate an autistic candidate to favour the practical assignment over the in-person interview if the candidate has difficulty in expressing themselves. These tests can also provide a basis for you to hire the most qualified or talented candidate for the role.

2. Eliminate any unpredictability

The unknown can often be a source of anxiety for many autistic people. Many autistic people have worries around unexpected or unforeseen changes to their routine, which they can find particularly difficult to deal with.

Providing information to autistic applicants in advance of the interview date can reassure candidates who may be feeling anxious about how their interview may go. The earlier and the more information you can provide to an autistic person, the more helpful it will be, and you can provide the following information in advance:

- The date the interview will take place.
- Specific start and finish times.
- Detailed information and pictures of the venue, including accessibility and details of the sensory environment.
- Details of what to bring with them to the interview.
- A description of how the interview will go, including details of the interview's format, who will interview the candidate, and if they will meet other people outside of the interview.

- The interview questions or topics and which interviewer is going to ask what question.
- Practice papers if there are any tests or assessments involved.
- A statement of commitment to equality and diversity, accessibility and inclusion.
- Information on how to ask questions and how to request accommodations they need.
- What the dress code for the interview is, and if there have been any adjustments agreed to accommodate the candidate's sensory needs.

It's important to stick to the format you intend to run the interview as much as possible, as any sudden or unexpected departures may increase any stress that an autistic candidate might be feeling. Issues which may cause an autistic person to feel more anxious may include if an interview starts late without notice, if requests for reasonable accommodations are not followed through on time or if a test uses a different format to the practice paper. If any changes happen to the interview, give the candidate as much notice as possible so that they can prepare for this eventuality.

3. Provide visuals

Many autistic people are visual thinkers, and so they might respond well to visual instructions, or direct instructions which are structured in sequence, and are augmented by pictures which describe each instruction. This includes images of the interview venue, as well as the interview panel.

4. Use clear, concise communication

Many autistic people prefer to be direct and honest in how they communicate, even if sometimes they might come across as blunt and matter-of-fact. It's important

to remember that this isn't because an autistic person is ignorant or lacks empathy. Many autistic people process information and their environment differently to neurotypical people, and may tend to think in more literal terms. This can often reflect in how they interact with other people - for instance, many autistic people find trying to interpret sarcasm, acronyms, jargon, figures of speech, or ambiguous terms more difficult.

When interviewing an autistic candidate, try to use clear, concise language and say exactly what you mean where you can. Ask straightforward, concrete, closed questions which are directly related to what you're looking for from the candidate. Give as much detail as necessary for the candidate to answer the question. Avoid using slang, jargon, acronyms or asking general or ambiguous questions, if possible, unless they are directly connected with the job.

5. Consider your body language and tone of voice

Barriers that autistic people may face in terms of social understanding and in interpreting the context of everyday social situations, as well as to a neurotypical person in recognising and responding to these communication differences may mean that autistic people may interpret differently what a person means, and their body language.

Whilst the expectation to behave professionally often goes hand in hand with participating in a job interview, an autistic candidate may not always follow through with this, or may need to conduct themselves differently to meet their sensory needs.

For instance, some autistic people may be sensitive to touch, or find eye contact very painful, whereas others may find aspects of the dress code painful, like the fabrics used in suits, shirts or blouses, tie, or with meeting grooming standards.

Be as open-minded as you can when interviewing an autistic candidate. Don't place any judgement on their body language or if they don't accept your handshake. Speak with a flat affect or neutral accent or avoid making eye-contact when you speak.

6. Be mindful of the sensory environment

Some environments where job interviews take place can be overwhelming for autistic people, particularly in terms of sensory processing. For instance, an interviewer may be wearing strong aftershave or perfume, or the venue may have bright or strobing lights, loud fans, or particular smells that may be overwhelming. These make it much harder for an autistic person to concentrate on the interview.

Conducting a sensory audit of your interview venue is an ideal way of helping you to anticipate what aspects of the room may pose sensory stressors for autistic people, as well as what adjustments can be made to support them to show their best selves. This can include taking into account whether the room has bright lights, the room temperature, noise levels, or any environmental distractions. This can help you to make adjustments to the venue to make it more comfortable for an autistic candidate. It might be helpful to give a candidate more time to acclimatise themselves with the interview setting, be it in-person or remote, before the interview starts and to resolve any accessibility issues that may arise.

If it is a remote interview, you may also need to consider the sensory environment, including the sensory impact of your background, bright lights, strobe effects and loud noises, and if there may be environmental distractions like background noises or movements. You also may need to consider whether the candidate has received specific instructions on how to access the call as well as what to expect from the interview.



What other ways can I support an autistic candidate?

- Research into autism friendly interviews and reasonable accommodations. You can use this information to anticipate the kinds of support an autistic candidate may need when they apply for jobs at your organisation or when they go for an interview.
- Give the candidate enough time to process and respond to your interview questions, and offer prompts where necessary. Offering interview questions or topics in advance helps to give an autistic candidate time to process the question and think of an answer without feeling under pressure.
- Encourage the candidate to make themselves comfortable and to let you know if they need anything, using their preferred communication method. This can be a really important way of resolving any issues that may arise before the interview begins, such as making last-minute changes to the interview setting, offering a glass of water, pen and paper, or offering a different chair or cushion. You can also send a list of Accommodations your organisation provides, as well as a Reasonable Accommodation Passport to the candidate.
- Offer a range of options that may support an autistic candidate at the interview. Depending on an autistic candidate's needs, they may favour a different type of interview to the traditional interview, which can be a video interview, performing a task-based assessment connected to the job or if they wish to bring an advocate or companion with them who can support them. Find out which supports or accommodations they're most comfortable with and put this in place in advance of the interview. For example, allowing the candidate to give a presentation or show examples of their previous work might help the candidate to demonstrate a fuller picture of their skills and abilities than simply asking a question about their skills and expecting the candidate to come up with an off the cuff answer.
- Allowing an autistic candidate to bring a supporter or companion with them to the interview can be a substantial way of supporting them to manage any anxiety or nervousness they may have around the interview and how it may go. It can help to make an autistic candidate less nervous or anxious about the interview process if they're going through it with somebody they trust, and they can contribute to questions where the candidate may feel stuck or are unsure of what to say in the moment.
- Offer prompts or verbal cues for when you would like an autistic candidate to clarify or provide more information. This can help an autistic candidate to feel more comfortable and to answer questions in full.
- Do judge an autistic person on their ability to do their job, and not necessarily on any personal characteristics that are not directly connected to the job. For example, an ability to show eye contact, or needing to stim, show vocal tics or process their surroundings.
- Don't surprise candidates with unexpected tasks or questions as this can be particularly stressful for autistic candidates. Try to offer candidates more time to prepare for all aspects of the job interview and what to expect on the day
- Don't expect an autistic person to make eye contact. If an autistic person does not make eye contact, it doesn't mean that they're not paying attention or listening to what you're saying. Some people may find eye contact very uncomfortable, even painful, or may concentrate more easily without having the pressure of having to maintain eye contact with the people sitting in front of them. This might be particularly uncomfortable or intimidating in a panel interview where there may be two or three people looking at you at once. If the candidate feels uncomfortable about sitting directly in front of the interviewer, you can allow the person to sit at an angle or you can make

adjustments to either sit in a different part of the room, wear sunglasses, to stim or move around the room during the interview as an accommodation.

- Don't dissuade a person from stimming if they need to regulate themselves. As interviews can be a particularly stressful experience for autistic candidates, some autistic people may need to stim to process their environment, express themselves, or to think about what they're going to say. It's important to note that stimming is not an indicator of a person's skills, their ability to manage stressful situations at work or their skills or personal qualities. It's crucial that you do not perceive stimming in a negative light or to judge a person for doing so. In fact, stimming is often a positive trait associated with autism as it can help an autistic person to concentrate on what they need to do and to perform at their best at the interview, and indeed at work.

- Don't require an autistic candidate to multitask during the interview. Expecting an autistic candidate to perform two or more complex tasks at once whilst expecting them to devote equal attention to both tasks can be particularly difficult for autistic people. This is because many autistic people may have differences in executive functioning or who might have difficulty in knowing which task to prioritise or with performing more than one task at once. In order to give an autistic person more time to process what they need to do for each task and to get a fuller picture on how their skills may be suited to the role, try to give the candidate time to do each task separately.



Testing an autistic candidate

As tests and assessments can also play a significant role in how candidates are recruited, this should also be considered when reviewing your recruitment practices with a view to making them more accessible to autistic candidates.

Psychometric tests in particular can disadvantage autistic candidates, and can be discriminatory, as the criteria used to score how candidates can react to different scenarios they might encounter at work can favour more neurotypical traits. The scenarios presented in psychometric tests often do not consider how differences in thinking and understanding might lead autistic or neurodivergent people to react differently to these situations, which can often diverge from what the assessment is looking for. If you wish to attract more autistic or neurodivergent staff, it is better to avoid using this method of testing in favour of a practical assessment.

If there are other tests that your organisation is using, you can make the testing process more accessible to autistic candidates by offering the following accommodations as standard:

- Provide a separate room with an invigilator where an autistic person can sit the assignment without having to deal with any additional sensory distractions.
- Provide extra time for an autistic person to process the questions asked and to complete the test.
- Try to use as much plain language in your questions as possible, and provide visuals to support what the question is asking.

If there is an ideal way of testing an autistic candidate, it would be to allow an autistic candidate to carry out a specific task related to their work, such as

proofreading a document, testing for bugs in your company's software or systems, or writing a short article, and build this into your interview process. This is a particularly effective way for an autistic candidate to show that they can do the job required.

This guidance does not just apply to the job interview, nor do they just support autistic candidates - it can also be applied right across your organisation's processes, for instance it could benefit all candidates who are going for positions in your organisation or promotions. It can also support your organisation to address parts of the recruitment process where there may be unconscious bias and to provide a standardised, objective recruitment process where every candidate can be recruited based on merit and on what skills or qualities they can bring to your organisation.



4. Autism onboarding checklist



Autism onboarding checklist

Provide new employees with as much information as you can in advance of the date the employee starts with your organisation. This can remove any stress or anxiety an autistic person may have around the first day of work and help them to anticipate what will happen and get the most out of their first day with your organisation.

TASK	BY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
<p>Employment contract: Encourage the new employee to review and sign the employment contract and place it in their HR file.</p>		
<p>Stay in touch before they start: Keep in touch with the new employee to see how they are doing. Find out how they would prefer to communicate at work. Ask them if they have any questions about the role or their first day.</p>		
<p>If the job is remote, send any equipment they need before they start: For new starters working from home, get their laptop and any other tools sent to their house, along with clear setup instructions, ahead of their first day on the job. This means there's time to resolve any technical issues that might come with setting up a workspace from home.</p>		
<p>Formalities: Request keys/badges/tags for the employee to access buildings. Also request any laptop, phone or software they need for their job.</p>		
<p>Provide a workspace: Ensure the employee's workspace is fully operational, including access to a desk, chair, computer, equipment, licences for software, company internet/intranet, etc.</p> <p>Ensure that the workplace is located in a space where the autistic person is comfortable in which meets the employee's sensory needs (is it in a quiet part of the office, or near a window).</p>		
<p>Survey the workspace environment and reduce sensory stimuli where possible: Ask the employee if there is anything that they might be sensitive to, and make adjustments to the workspace environment accordingly.</p> <p>Investigate the sensory environment of the building more widely using our Sensory Checklist to see if there might be any sensory distractions, particularly around parts of the building the employee is likely to frequent. If an employee needs to stim or might need to access a quiet space, see if a space like a Meeting Room can be booked for this purpose.</p>		

<p>Involve colleagues in the onboarding process from the outset: Provide employees, particularly the new employee’s colleagues on the team, with the information they need well in advance of the employee’s first day in their new job.</p>		
<p>Send out information: Put together and send a welcome pack about formalities to the new employee. The more information you can send an autistic employee, the better they can prepare for their first day! Ensure that any information you provide is concise, context-specific, clearly written, and broken into steps.</p> <p>Include a schedule of what will happen on the first day, an agenda for the week, who they will meet and their role. Give them detailed visual instructions on how to get to their place of work, a map of the building, pictures and short bios of people they are likely to meet, including managers and teammates, and any other pieces of information they need to start their new job.</p> <p>You can also send a Reasonable Accommodation Passport and Sensory Checklist to the employee in case they wish to fill out any aspects of the role that they may be sensitive to, or any aspects where they may need support with.</p> <p>You can let the employee know that you can answer any questions they have about their role or the company or organisation.</p> <p>You can also provide a list of tasks of what they might be expected to do over the course of their job, with a picture describing what happens during the task.</p>		
<p>Invite the employee to department or team meetings before they start: You can also arrange a more informal get-together, like a coffee morning or invite them to lunch so the new employee can get to know their colleagues before they start their new job.</p>		
<p>Employee training: Organise any training an employee needs before their first day at your organisation. This should include their induction or training on how to perform their role, before the employee starts.</p>		
<p>Arrange a tour of the building before their first day: If an autistic employee would like a tour in advance of their first day at work, you can arrange a colleague or somebody from HR to meet with them and provide a guided tour of their workplace so the employee can familiarise themselves with their workplace.</p>		

<p>Responsibilities: Ensure that if their team lead or line manager needs to make changes to how tasks are done within the team, that this is done before the employee starts.</p>		
<p>Send a welcome gift or a welcome pack: Send a gift or a welcome pack to the employee as a gesture for starting their new job.</p>		
<p>Assign a workplace mentor: Appoint a colleague as a mentor or workplace 'buddy' to support the new employee. They can walk them through the workplace, accompany them for lunch, introduce them to colleagues, or any other social gatherings that might happen at work and answer any questions they might have.</p>		



The first day at work

The official onboarding process should take place on the first day of the employee's job. This can be a great opportunity for you to provide the employee with all the information they need about the company, the workplace culture and norms, their work environment and how their work day will be structured, their new colleagues and any support the workplace provides.

It can be good to set a small task which introduces one of their duties within their role, as this can give the employee both a practical sense of what the role entails, as well as the time and headspace they need to adjust to their new job and how the organisation works, and process their new surroundings.

TASK	BY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Introduction: Encourage colleagues/mentor to introduce themselves and present a welcome gift to them.		
Official welcome: Have the manager, CEO or team lead welcome new employees and provide an overview of the company or organisation's history, ethos, and objectives.		
Introduce the employee to different departments: Introduce the employee to different departments they will be interacting with. Encourage the leaders in these departments to talk about their role, where they fit into the organisation and how the employee might interact with their department.		
Formalities: Give the employee any passes or badges they need to enter the building, if applicable.		
Tour of the office/workspace: Show new employees around their new workplace and the different departments within the company. Introduce them to any employees, as well different facilities within the company, such as the canteen, breakout rooms, stationery, bathrooms, etc.		
Send a welcome letter or email: Ask the manager or CEO to send an email to staff within the office to introduce the employee and their new role within the organisation		

<p>Take the employee for lunch: Encourage the team to go to lunch together as a way of getting to know each other. You may also encourage new employees to go out for lunch together.</p>		
<p>General onboarding within the department: Encourage the manager to introduce the new employee to different aspects of the job, like their job tasks, or how each department that they interact with works.</p>		



During the first week at work

Onboarding an employee doesn't just happen on their first day at work. New employees use their first week with your organisation to find their way around, to get acquainted with their new role and to get to know their colleagues and their managers. This early stage is a good time to provide them with additional information they need for their role and assign them their first job tasks.

TASK	BY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
<p>Team onboarding: Encourage colleagues from the employee's department, if applicable, to provide an overview of their role, including their day-to-day responsibilities.</p>		
<p>Introduction to the organisation's products or services: Provide the employee with information about the company's or organisation's products and services, how they work, and how they might relate to the employee's role.</p>		
<p>Explain workplace culture, policies & expectations: Have a manager explicitly explain all the aspects of workplace culture to the employee, as well as all workplace policies (like Equality or Health & Safety) and expectations around how staff should conduct themselves at work. Provide structured documents that an autistic employee can refer to at any time.</p>		
<p>Legal matters: Encourage the new employee to read and sign any further procedures related to their role.</p>		
<p>Introduce technology: Introduce the employee to any tools the organisation uses, including any software, equipment or technology, and explain how each tool works. If the employee needs to use any assistive technology, you can also use this as an opportunity to introduce the employee to these supports.</p>		
<p>Set mutual expectations between the employee and their manager: This may involve having the employee's manager set out what the employee needs to do in their job, and how their role fits within the company's framework.</p> <p>Equally, it should be an opportunity for the employee to highlight if they need any adjustments or support to succeed in their role.</p>		

<p>Build rapport within the team: Encourage the employee's colleagues to bond, if they're comfortable with this, and include the new employee in any group activities, like lunches, tea or coffee breaks or any after-work group activities.</p> <p>If the employee isn't comfortable with this, it might be a good idea to ask the mentor to introduce the employee and encourage them to do these activities on a one-to-one basis. Provide the option for the employee to join any group activities if they feel comfortable with the sensory load of taking part, they can join in, but there's no pressure if they don't want to.</p>		
<p>Assign the employee with their first task: Have their line manager assign them their first task, when they are ready. Encourage the team or mentor to provide any support they need to successfully complete their first task or project.</p>		



After the first month

Has the positive impression from the recruitment process been confirmed?

The first two months in a new job are critical for employees. This can provide an opportunity for both you and the employee to establish ways to provide regular mutual feedback about your respective roles, learn more about how the employee is finding different aspects of their role and to set out a career development pathway for the employee based on their interests in this field.

This will help the employee to get to grips with any new tasks, colleagues and structures they may encounter, and that employee is continually supported to flourish in their role with your organisation.

TASK	BY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
<p>Second impressions: Encourage the manager to seek further feedback from the employee to see how they're getting on and how they're adjusting to the organisation and their role. It might be a good opportunity to ask them if there are any aspects of the work they like or want to improve? Have their concerns been addressed since the last meeting?</p>		
<p>Regular feedback: Conduct a 1:1 meeting between the employee and their line manager, where the manager can provide constructive feedback on the employee's performance so far? What aspects is the employee doing well in, are there are parts of the job the employee could develop and what parts of the job does the employee need support with? Schedule this review at regular intervals agreed between the employee and their line manager.</p>		
<p>Team events: Organise a team activity or event to further build team morale, and include any new employees in the outing.</p>		
<p>Build expertise within the organisation: Ensure that staff have access to a platform to enable them to share expertise with each other and promote continuous staff training and development within the organisation.</p>		
<p>Career development: Ensure the manager and employee agree upon any training and career development opportunities the employee wants to take and the direction where the employee wants to develop their career and build more expertise in their field. You can register them for any courses agreed between them.</p>		

5. Reasonable Accommodations for autistic people



Reasonable Accommodation Passport

The Reasonable Accommodation Passport is a document that supports autistic employees who may require additional support at work.

The Passport is a confidential document agreed between an employee and their manager. It maintains a written record of what accommodations or workplace supports have been agreed to between the employee and their manager, as well as which aspects of work that an autistic employee may need support with. It also explains any changes made to the employee's role, and sets out what supports the autistic employee wishes to use at work.

The Passport includes a built-in review period which allows the employer and employee to monitor the supports being implemented and that the adjustments or accommodations reflect the employee's support needs at work. It will ensure the reasonable accommodations are put in place and can be adapted to the employee's needs, and to meet changes to their job role or tasks. For some autistic employees, whose support needs might fluctuate depending on what job tasks they're doing or depending on their physical, emotional or mental wellbeing, the Reasonable Accommodation Passport can also provide flexibility for different situations - it can include additional measures or accommodations which can be applied temporarily to fully meet the employee's additional support needs as they arise.



How to complete a Reasonable Accommodation Passport

To complete a Reasonable Accommodation Passport, first the autistic employee can request a meeting with their line manager. This meeting should take place in a quiet and confidential setting where there are few sensory distractions, like a meeting room, a breakout room or the manager's office. Line managers should try to create a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable, confident and free to disclose that they are autistic, or if they have another difference, disability or health condition and what reasonable accommodations can support them at work. This supportive environment will allow both parties to discuss any reasonable accommodations that can be made to support the employee at work.

An employee's decision to disclose any disability or difference they have to their manager often takes a great deal of confidence. For instance, it can often take an autistic person feeling safe and comfortable enough about their autistic identity to disclose that they're autistic to employers or to discuss that they have autistic traits and that they might need support with particular aspects of work.

Some autistic people might particularly need reassurance that there will be no adverse consequences arising from their disclosure and that they will be supported at work. Some people may hold stigmatising or discriminatory attitudes towards disability, particularly against neurotypes like autism. Many autistic and disabled people fear being discriminated against at work, or have negative experiences of disclosing their disability in the past.

Due to these factors, every decision an employee makes to disclose their disability and ask for accommodations at work should always be treated with respect, sensitivity, and in strictest confidence unless the employee gives their express consent to share this information with other parties who need to know about their disability and support needs.

The Reasonable Accommodation Passport allows the employee to:

- Explain how having a disability or neurodevelopmental difference like autism might impact them at work, or how it might have an impact on the way that they do their job.
- Explain which barriers they experience may hinder them from being fully included at work.
- Suggest which accommodations they believe would support them to work to their highest potential.
- Review how closely the accommodations match their support needs in practice and how effective these accommodations are in addressing aspects of work where they need support.
- Explain if they need any changes to the supports they receive at work, and where they might need additional or different kinds of support, if their support needs change.
- Know how their manager will stay in contact with them in the case where an aspect of being autistic, like burnout, illness or any other disabilities, causes them to be absent from work for any period of time.
- Include any information from their doctor or specialist, like a letter or statement, that they may feel would support their request for workplace accommodations.

Their manager would then have the opportunity to follow up on any actions agreed between themselves and the employee to apply workplace accommodations contained within the Passport.

An employee who uses the Passport to secure accommodations can also share it with others within the organisation, for instance like a Personnel or HR Manager. It can also remove the need for an employee to have the same potentially sensitive and personal conversations over and over again with different departments to secure the supports they need or to renegotiate their accommodations every time that their job role changes or if their manager changes.

It also ensures that the employee has a continuity of support whenever any changes happen at work, reassuring autistic employees that their accommodations will be the same even if their work changes. It also gives employees more control over to whom they disclose their disability or difference, and a predictable way for the employee to request what accommodations or adjustments they need when they are at work.

The Passport can:

- Ensure that both the employee and their manager is clear about what accommodations have been agreed and that both have a record of the supports that have been agreed between both parties.
- Reduce the need to reassess and renegotiate accommodations every time an employee changes jobs, moves to a different location as part of their job or is assigned a new manager.
- Provide the employee and manager with a platform or precedent for which to base any future conversations about the employee's accommodations.

If the employer's manager changes during the course of their job, the employer should only share any completed Reasonable Accommodation Passport with the employee's new manager once they have the employee's express permission to do so. If the manager receives the employee's consent and if the organisation's policy permits this, the manager, as well as the Organisation's Personnel and HR team, may have access to a signed copy of the Passport.

The Passport, and the reasonable accommodations agreed between the employee and employer should be reviewed regularly after the accommodations have been initially put in place. Whilst the employer and employee can best decide for themselves as to how they wish to conduct the review process, in accordance with how reviews are conducted within the organisation, this can ensure that these supports can effectively support the autistic employee to perform their job duties in accordance with their role and to remove any barriers they encounter at work. It also ensures that if the supports in place can no longer be as supportive to the autistic employee whilst they're at work, it provides an opportunity for the employee and their manager to further discuss if there are different supports, or any further supports, which can support the autistic employee in their role.

The employee can also ask to review the accommodations in place where they see fit, or when changes happen to their job that can potentially impose further barriers at work. Conducting regular reviews on how the agreed workplace supports are working in practice can help to ensure that they are the right accommodations to effectively support the employee in their work. Changes to the type of reasonable accommodations that need to be considered are pretty common. These changes can happen for a number of reasons. They can include technological advances, changes to an employee's job, changes to an employee's support needs or if an employee feels that different or further supports might better support their needs.

Reasonable Accommodation Passport

Name of employee:

Name of manager:

Passport history:

This table provides some information on the Passport's history and how the Passport was used to support the candidate. This includes any dates where previous meetings were held, as well as the manager who attended the meeting or relevant member of staff who were overseeing the process of providing workplace supports.

DATE OF REVIEW	MANAGER NAME

DOCUMENT COMPLETION INFORMATION

By completing this Passport, the employee consents that the information can be held by their manager, and if appropriate, their HR Manager. If the employee has a change of manager, the manager who is leaving will seek the employee's consent before transferring the Passport, in strictest confidence to their new manager.

DETAILS	
Date of meeting	
Employee name	
Manager name	
Other attendees and their role	
Purpose of meeting	
Employee's current role	

OVERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE'S DIFFERENCE, DISABILITY OR CIRCUMSTANCES AND HISTORY

This will allow the employee and their manager to gain a better understanding of the employee's difference or disability, and how it might impact the employee at work. **Suggested questions which might help to start the discussion:**

QUESTION	ANSWER	ACTION POINTS, DATE & OWNER
What is the nature of your difference or disability?		
How does your disability, difference or condition have an impact on you when you're at work?		
Do you feel that impacts are constant or do they come and go from time-to-time?		
If relevant, do you use any supports outside of work?		
What impact does it have on you on a sensory, physical or emotional level?		
What are some adjustments or accommodations that you think can help to support you at work?		
Do you have any particular sensory needs that you like accommodated whilst you're at work?		
How would you like us to communicate with you when you're at work?		
How would you like us to support you on a sensory level when at work?		
Is there anything that we can do for you that can help you to feel included at work? Is there a colleague at work that you can trust who you can turn to if you're feeling stressed, becoming sick, or need some support? If so, could you please give their name/contact details?		

AGREED ACCOMMODATIONS

This is a list of all the agreed accommodations at present.

ACCOMMODATION	DATE OF ACCOMMODATION	DATE OF REVIEW	CHANGE OF ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED (WHERE APPROPRIATE)

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Please provide any additional information that may be useful in case of an emergency. These should be checked and updated at review meetings, as appropriate.

Who are the people you would like us to contact in the event that you become unwell or overwhelmed at work?	Name: Relationship: Contact details:
Are there any external sources of support that you would be happy for your line manager to contact on your behalf if you become unwell or overwhelmed?	Name: Relationship: Contact details:
How would you prefer to communicate with your manager in the event that you cannot work?	Text: Email: Phone call: Phone call by a designated person:

Employee's signature: _____

Date: _____

Manager's signature: _____

Date: _____

6.

Communicating with autistic people



Communicating with autistic people in the workplace

- **Ask the autistic employee how they would like to communicate.** Some autistic people may have a preference for communicating in writing. Other autistic people may prefer verbal communication or even visual or non-verbal forms of communication, like written communication. Once an autistic person indicates a preference for how they wish to communicate, follow through with this as much as possible and be consistent in how you communicate to them.
- **Give an autistic person advance notice of when any one-to-one or team meetings happen, and if possible, what the meeting will cover.** This helps an autistic person to prepare for the meeting and to think about what they would like to raise at the meeting.
- **Give an autistic person advance notice of when you wish to come to their space to speak to them.** This helps an autistic person to prepare for this conversation and think about what they want to say. It can also be helpful to let them know why you're coming to their space, and what you wish to talk to them about.
- **Where possible, provide advance notice of when changes to meetings happen, particularly if any unexpected events happen that can potentially disrupt an autistic person's routine.** This can help to reduce an autistic person's stress or anxiety when these changes happen.
- **Don't be offended if an autistic person might avoid shaking your hand, or react differently to your approach from what you would expect.** Some autistic people may be sensitive to touch and might react strongly to being touched, or sensory processing differences related to touch. Others might be more tactile and indicate a preference for touch, so might be more willing to shake your hand. Try to avoid touching or shaking an autistic person's hand unless an autistic person initiates it.
- **Don't take it personally if an autistic person doesn't enjoy social conversation or prefers not to engage in small talk.** However, some autistic people enjoy social interactions, particularly if the conversation's about a hobby or a special interest of theirs. If they have a particular interest they want to talk about, you can use this as an opportunity to learn more about the topic the employee may be interested in and to bond with the employee.
- **Don't expect eye contact when you're talking to an autistic person.** Some autistic people might find eye contact very intense or very painful or may prefer not to make eye contact as it can be an intimate experience for many autistic people. They often find it easier to process information or their surroundings if they do not have to look directly at the person who is talking to them. The best thing to do if an autistic person wishes not to make eye contact is to respect their choice, to carry on with the conversation, and to offer prompts to ensure that the person has understood what you're saying and that you're moving onto the next topic that you wish to discuss.
- **Be patient.** Many autistic people may take longer to process what you mean by what you say, so please give an autistic person the time and space they need to process what you said if they need it. Don't try to hurry or interrupt an autistic person. You can also reassure them to take their time to process what you've just said and give a response. It can also help if during a conversation, that you ask one question or give one piece of information at a time.
- **Be calm.** Keep calm and maintain an even tone whenever you communicate with an autistic person. If an autistic person doesn't understand what you've said, try not to take it personally or judge them for needing more time to process the words you said. You can ask if they understand everything you said and clarify anything they may be unsure about.

• **Be mindful of personal space.** It's important to note that not everyone is comfortable with having somebody close to them. This can be particularly true for an autistic person, who may need their personal space and may feel particularly anxious around having somebody close to them. If an autistic person prefers to not have somebody near them, the best thing to do is to respect their preference and keep your distance. Similarly, if there's somebody in your personal space that you're not comfortable with, you can ask them calmly to move back.

• **Treat autistic people with respect, keep it positive and don't treat them differently to any other colleague whilst they're at work.** If an autistic person is quiet or prefers to do the task differently from their neurotypical colleagues, take this into account. Treat an autistic employee the same way as to how you would like to be treated. Don't speak down to, demean, undermine or belittle them when they're working.

• **Be non-judgemental.** It's important to remind ourselves that not everything we do always makes sense to those around us, so try not to judge an autistic person if they do a task differently, need to do a task in a specific way or react differently from what you expect. Try to, within reason, be as accommodating of these differences when you can.

• **Set clear expectations for the employee.** With an autistic employee, you may need to set out more explicitly about what you and your organisation expect from them when they're at work, and what they need to do as part of their job on a day-to-day basis. You also may need to clearly explain the different aspects of your organisation's workplace culture and etiquette, as well as any unwritten rules of the workplace, like how birthdays are celebrated, after-work socialising, if there are any clubs they can join that relates to their interests, or what colleagues do for lunch.

• **Consider the impact your workplace's sensory environment may have on how an autistic person might communicate.** Some environments within the workplace may contain stressors, like harsh or fluorescent or flickering lights, strong smells or loud noises, or from lots of conversations going on at once, which an autistic person may find distracting or overwhelming. You can ask the employee to find out which parts of the workplace may be distracting or overwhelming and make the necessary adjustments to address these environmental barriers.

• **Use clear, direct, and concise communication.** Say exactly what you mean and don't assume that something is obvious unless you've said it in words or put it in writing. Try to avoid colloquial expressions, idioms or metaphors wherever possible.

• **If there is jargon, acronyms or slang used within your company or industry, explain these terms to an employee** if you are using them, including why these terms are used.

• **Use plain language when using written communication.** Avoid using slang or acronyms unless they are directly related to the job, and after you have explained what they mean. The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has excellent resources for writing in Plain English, which you can find here. You can also use Easy-to-Read if an autistic employee also has an intellectual disability, or has other support needs around literacy or processing information. Inclusion Europe, an organisation that represents people with intellectual disabilities and their families across Europe, has guidelines and a checklist for producing information in Easy-to-Read which you can find on their website:

www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read/

• **Provide clear, concise and specific instructions.** Give an employee clear, concise and specific

instructions on how to perform each task, breaking the task down into steps that they can follow. Don't assume that an autistic person will pick up what you mean if you leave anything out, or if you don't say precisely what they need to do. For example, if they need to give out copies of a report, say how many copies they need to photocopy, and who they need to them.

- **Structure instructions or tasks you provide in sequence, in order of each step they need to do.**

This can clear any confusion or misunderstandings an autistic person might have with your instructions, and they can refer to this if they're unsure about what to do next. This also gives an autistic person the time and space they need to process instructions.

Accompanying instructions with visuals is always helpful for an autistic person. It can be a particularly helpful way of ensuring that an autistic person understands what they need to do to complete the task by following your instructions.

- **Give an autistic person as much information in advance as possible.** The more information you can provide for an autistic person, the better, as this can help to provide structure and routine to an autistic person's working day and can reassure an autistic person of what they need to do at work.

- **Avoid giving too many instructions at once where an autistic employee needs to figure out what they need to do.** If you're speaking, give one instruction at a time, give them time to process each instruction. Offer a written version of these steps, accompanied with pictures explaining or demonstrating each step.

- **Provide a well-structured work environment.** Many autistic people may need a structured and predictable working environment to perform at their

best for your organisation. You can work with the employee, as well as any coach or support workers to prioritise activities, organising tasks into a timetable for daily, weekly and monthly tasks, breaking large tasks into smaller tasks. Some people may also like to have information around their start and finish times, or how they can use flexible working, and when to take breaks and lunches to get into a routine around their work

- **Conduct regular performance reviews with an autistic employee.** Provide regular 1:1 meetings with an autistic employee to see how they're doing, and to find out if they have any aspects of work that they need support with. Once you have agreed on the format with the employee, this can be an opportunity for both employer and employee to discuss how the employee is performing if expectations are being met on both sides, and if there are any further comments, questions or suggestions.

- **If you're holding a meeting with an autistic employee, try to have it in a part of the workplace where there are few distractions, and reduce as much background noise as possible.** Don't hold 1:1 meetings with an autistic person in a noisy, very bright, stimulating or uncomfortable environment. If the environment has lots of flickering or bright lights, strong smells or loud noises, this can be distracting or overwhelming for an autistic person who has sensory sensitivities.

- **Provide honest, constructive and direct feedback.** If an autistic person completes a task incorrectly, explain clearly but tactfully what problems are happening, why any mistakes they made led to these problems, see if they have understood, and explain sensitively but clearly what they need to do instead. Avoid insulting or attacking an autistic person for making a mistake, particularly if it wasn't intentional.

• **Be mindful that some autistic people may have low confidence or self-esteem.** Make sure that your criticism is constructive and not personal, and that you also provide positive feedback to an autistic employee on aspects of the job that they're doing well.

• **Provide clear and structured training.** Whilst this might take a number of forms, like more informal training with a colleague or formal training days, ensuring that any training you use is structured can be an invaluable way for autistic employees to succeed at work.

• **Allow an autistic person to stim if they need to regulate themselves.** Some autistic people need to stim in order to process their environment, to express themselves, or to process what they're going to say. Stimming is, in many cases, a positive trait that can help an autistic person to concentrate on what they need to say or do, or manage stressful situations and give their best at work. It should be seen in such terms and nobody within the organisation should judge a person for needing to stim at work. You can also provide fidget toys or sensory objects like squishy balls.

• **Provide reassurance to an autistic person in stressful situations.** As many autistic people can be meticulous about their work, there may be situations where they can become anxious or stressed where their performance is not perfect or if something happens that's outside of their control. A key way to support an autistic employee is to give them concrete solutions to these issues, or that there isn't a problem if they may be delayed every so often.



7. Autism and disclosure



What is disclosure?

Disclosure means a person decides to share some aspects of their disability, difference or condition to others within their environment, such as at work, or in other settings such as with friends or with family.

The person has the choice on whether they wish to disclose their disability, along with how much information they want to reveal about themselves and to whom they wish to be open about their autistic identity, or indeed any disabilities they may have.

Every autistic person, as with other disabled people, has different ideas or feels differently about the disclosure process and how much, if anything, that they want to reveal to others. For example, an autistic person may feel that they need to disclose that they're autistic to their managers to obtain support at work, but may not feel comfortable sharing their diagnosis with colleagues, or vice versa.

Some people may, understandably, feel very reluctant to disclose any differences or disabilities they have unless they encounter difficulties at work, and treat the process as a 'need-to-know'. Other people might be very open and comfortable about their autistic identity, and may have no problems disclosing to colleagues to also raise awareness and educate colleagues at work, as well as to seek out support or accommodations for their needs. Others may feel that they have autistic traits, but might not have the opportunity, means or the know-how to pursue a formal autism diagnosis.

In any event, an autistic person should not feel pressured or obliged by anyone else to disclose if they don't feel comfortable. Your organisation is obliged under the law to keep any personal information disclosed to you confidential. Your organisation also has a duty to provide reasonable accommodations if a disability is disclosed if the employee requests them.

Likewise, as mentioned in our Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace section of this Toolkit, there are several benefits to your business in encouraging people to disclose their differences or disabilities at work, including:

- Increased productivity.
- Increased staff retention and attendance.
- Increased workplace safety.
- Reduced long-term training costs.
- More diversity across the organisation.
- Enhanced reputation to future employees, clients and customers.

This can also help your organisation to tap into a talent pool of autistic people whose skills and personal qualities may include the following:

- Diligent.
- Honest.
- Detail-oriented.
- Non-judgemental.
- Conscientious.
- Who can hyperfocus on the tasks they're interested in.
- Who can come up with innovative or creative solutions to complex challenges or meet your organisation's needs.

For these reasons, ASIAm recommends that your organisation encourages autistic candidates to disclose whenever they feel comfortable and ready to do so. It is important to note that there shouldn't be any negative consequences for disclosing a disability and/or any support needs. After all, most of us have disclosed something to an employer, be it pregnancy, an illness, or a personal or family issue, where we sought some added support when we needed them. The disclosure process shouldn't be seen as anything mysterious - it's good management to ensure that everyone has the support they need to perform at their best when at work.

What are some things that autistic people might consider themselves which can factor into their decision to disclose their disability?

There are a number of factors that an autistic person might weigh up before they make the decision on whether they intend to disclose their disability when they're at work.

An autistic candidate or employee might have some concerns that having a difference or disability like autism might impose barriers to them at work, be it visible or invisible. For instance, they may be concerned that they may be treated differently from their neurotypical or non-disabled colleagues. They may fear being judged on the basis of being autistic alone, and not for the skills, talents or personal qualities they can bring to the role.

They may also fear that outdated assumptions or preconceptions about autism may have an impact on them at work. They may also have concerns that their job performance would not be judged to exactly the same standards as their neurotypical colleagues with no consideration being made for any differences. This can particularly happen if they need to do their role differently, or prioritise or perform their tasks in a different way, need extra time to do particular tasks or need more support.

They might also have concerns around what the implications would be if they were to observe workplace rules or norms differently, for instance, a colleague's birthday, or if they were to perform workplace tasks or communicate differently to their neurotypical colleagues.

There is also a real fear that making a disclosure can be used against them, not just in terms of their career prospects, but also can be used to undermine or bully them at work, or to take aspects of their job away from them.

Some aspects of work that an autistic person might consider before disclosing to employers may include:

- Would they need to 'mask' or camouflage their autistic traits to fit into the workplace or to make themselves appear more acceptable to their neurotypical colleagues?
- Would they need to explain particular aspects of how they experience their autistic traits to colleagues?
- How do they deal with perceptions or attitudes colleagues or managers may have around autism and autistic people?
- How do they manage change, particularly if there are unexpected changes that can be disruptive to their routine.
- How do they deal with hierarchies and power structures in the workplace?.
- If they need to communicate or regulate themselves differently, would they have their needs understood or accommodated for.
- Is there pressure to quickly adapt to new tasks, or to be flexible at work when you prefer routine.
- How do they deal with workplace stress, or with sensory processing differences around particular aspects of the workplace (i.e. dress code or environment).
- How to explain any gaps in their employment or education history.
- Would they be subjected to being mistreated if they disclose that they're autistic at work?
- How do they express their needs at work?

These factors all have an impact on whether an autistic person decides to disclose their difference or disability to their employer, as well as when or how they might decide to do so. This is especially true if the person has more than one difference or disability.

Disclosure is a personal choice

Disclosure is a personal choice. It is up to an autistic person to decide if they wish to disclose that they're autistic at work, how much information they wish to reveal about their autistic traits to their employer, and what supports they need to perform their role effectively and to the best of their ability.

As an organisation, you shouldn't necessarily expect an employee to have a formal diagnosis to disclose their diagnosis. There can be substantial barriers for an autistic person to obtain a formal diagnosis, particularly as an adult. This can range from the cost of obtaining a formal diagnosis from a clinical professional, which alone can cost between €800 and over €1,500 depending on the practitioner, to different aspects of the autistic experience which can fall outside what is commonly understood to be autism by neurotypical people.

It may be a good idea to, if your organisation has an Employee Assistance Programme in place, explore if such a programme may cover part or all of the costs of obtaining a formal autism diagnosis, or if not, see if an employee can apply for tax relief or subsidy against the costs of getting formally diagnosed.

Disclosing that they are autistic, or might have autistic traits, should, where possible, be sufficient to get the support they need. It might be a good idea to encourage an employee to disclose they're autistic if they feel comfortable and confident to do so, and if you feel confident that the employee will feel supported at work, and will get the support they need when they need them.

As trust can play such a significant factor in whether a person decides to disclose, any disclosure of a disability, including autism, should always be treated with the utmost sensitivity and respect. All disclosures should only be shared with the person's consent and on a "need-to-know" basis with the people who

can assist an autistic person to get any supports they need, unless the person wishes to share this information.



Masking and burnout

Another thing to consider when making any changes to the disclosure process is that your organisation may already be recruiting autistic staff or have autistic staff already working for your organisation, but you might not necessarily be aware of it. This is because many autistic people might opt not to disclose their difference or disability whilst they're at work (for example, they might feel that colleagues don't need to know), or they may feel pressured to 'mask' or hide their autistic traits for fear of being treated differently or negatively at work.

Masking usually consists of social camouflaging and/or compensation techniques an autistic person might use to appear more neurotypical or more sociable, to blend in at work or to suppress socially awkward or unacceptable traits. These techniques might range from observing or mirroring 'neurotypical' behaviour or learning social scripts to making eye contact or sublimating autistic traits. Although masking is seen as a survival strategy by many autistic and neurodivergent people, it shouldn't necessarily be encouraged or expected, as it can take a great toll on an autistic person's wellbeing, and can lead to burnout among autistic staff who consistently mask over a prolonged period of time.

A period of consistent masking can take such a mental, physical or emotional toll on an autistic person that it can lead to what is known as 'autistic burnout', which can take weeks or even months for a person to recover from.

Autistic burnout is where an autistic person might feel intense physical, mental or emotional exhaustion and a temporary loss of skills, as a result of having to navigate a world, including workplaces, that are designed to be accessible to neurotypical people or having to consistently mask autistic traits to meet neurotypical social norms and expectations. This is different to workplace burnout, due to the fact that it

can be more intense for an autistic person, and it can often take much longer for an autistic person to recover from.

As with masking, this is often discussed among autistic people, but is not as well known or as discussed among people who are not autistic. For some, it might also include an overwhelming sense of physical or mental exhaustion, greater susceptibility to sensory overload, a temporary or sudden loss of skills, or greater sensitivity to your organisation's sensory environment, like lights, crowds or noises.

As employers, you can play a key role in reducing autistic burnout, and this is one of the best and cost-effective ways to support autistic employees at work. This includes accepting an autistic person and providing support, allowing the autistic person to be themselves at work where possible, and encouraging an autistic person to set boundaries and ask for support when needed, without the guilt or judgement that might come with asking for such support.

Reducing an autistic person's overall workload or providing some breaks or downtime at points when an autistic person feels stressed or overwhelmed by their workload can also be really helpful in order to avoid or mitigate the effects of burnout.

This can include making sure that an employee has reasonable accommodations that match their needs at work and working with the employee to include any additional support for when they might be feeling stressed, overwhelmed or exhausted, or experiencing sensory overload. Ensuring that your services are accessible to the autistic community can also help to reduce autistic burnout on a wider level.

How can I support an autistic person if they disclose their disability?

In this section, you can find some suggestions to help facilitate positive experiences of disclosure for everyone. Disclosing a disability is a personal decision that rests with an autistic person or disabled person. There are plenty of things to consider if your organisation wishes to encourage more people to disclose their disability or create a more diverse or inclusive workforce.

How an autistic person views disclosing their diagnosis is heavily influenced by their past experiences. For instance, how they wish to disclose may be shaped by a number of factors, like any past disclosure experiences, whether they had any experiences around being autistic growing up, or whether they feel comfortable or confident about sharing their disability with others. Also worth considering is that some autistic people may have had negative or traumatic experiences that might be associated with how other people reacted to their autistic selves.

There are also plenty of valid reasons why a disabled employee or an autistic employee might choose not to disclose their difference or their disability. People aren't obliged to disclose their disability if they don't want to, and it shouldn't be seen as a betrayal or a breach of trust if they prefer not to disclose, but decide at a disclose at later date. These include:

- Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. Ireland has one of the lowest rates of employment among disabled people in Europe. Just 32% of disabled people were in employment in 2017, when compared to the EU average (50%). Autistic people face particular barriers to entering the labour market, with over 80% of autistic people being unemployed or underemployed.
- Some employers might react negatively to a disclosure, or treat a person differently if they disclose a disability.

- There is a significant degree of negative stigma attached to disability, which can be compounded by outdated attitudes towards disability held by some people within society.
- Much of the narrative around disability can be negative or damaging, as it can be portrayed as a lack of capacity or ability to do something - these perceptions can see disabled people as recipients of pity, care or charity, or as incapable of working because of their impairment or difference. None of these perceptions are true, and this can make it harder for autistic people and disabled people to find work in areas they are interested in.
- Disclosing a difference or disability is a personal decision, which often revolves around having to share personal or sensitive information about themselves that people wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable sharing with everybody.
- Many disabled people and autistic people still experience widespread and pervasive prejudice or discrimination because of their difference or their disability.



• For a long time, the history of employment and disability has often centred around the idea that sheltered workshops, particularly for members of the autistic community and people with intellectual disabilities, could provide employment opportunities for disabled people. Whilst this provided some employment opportunities for disabled people, this has proven to be an increasingly controversial practice, as it also helped to segregate and exclude disabled people from being employed in the mainstream labour market and the wider community. In some workshops, disabled people were often subjected to discrimination around pay and conditions, such as workers being paid significantly below the minimum wage at the time, and to other forms of exploitation and mistreatment, such as not having access to their rights at work, among other things.

• Many autistic people believe that many employers and neurotypical people don't see autism from the same perspective as autistic people, and that there is a lack of understanding of neurodiversity at work, and what it means to be a neurodivergent employee, which can have an impact on an autistic employee's experience at work. As a result, colleagues or managers who might not always come into contact with autistic people in their lives might hold attitudes around autism that might be considered to be outdated today.



Practical ways an employer can support disclosure

There are lots of things you can do as an employer to make the disclosure process easier for disabled employees, and this should always be centred around seeing autism and disability as natural parts of human diversity to celebrate and embrace.

The key to making the disclosure process easier is to create an open atmosphere and an inclusive workplace culture that seeks to encourage and support autistic employees to disclose that they're autistic when they feel comfortable and confident to do so. This includes:

- Ensuring that your organisation creates a workplace culture that supports and encourages disclosure by asking every employee if their needs are being accommodated. This includes in performance reviews or any 1:1 meetings, and having conversations about any supports they need and taking steps to ensure that as many of the supports as possible, if not all, are in place.
- Providing many opportunities for people to disclose any differences they have.
- Ensuring that all staff can access training on understanding and accepting autistic people, and disability awareness training.
- Take a positive attitude towards disability and autism, and the strengths and talents that autistic people and disabled people can bring to your organisation. Your organisation can take a number of steps to support this including holding Autism Understanding Training and Disability Equality Training, mainstreaming autism and disability across your organisation's policies and practices, reaching out to the autism community.
- Make your communications, websites, and environments more accessible to autistic people, and including autistic people in any decisions which impact the autism community, to name but a few.
- It really is important to stress that disability is not a dirty word, and that disability does not mean a lack of

capacity or ability or an inability to work in roles that a person is interested in or passionate about. Autistic people and disabled people are often disabled more by their environment or by aspects of how we structure work, and a label or an identity like 'Autistic' does not always give an impression on the candidate's skills, and how they might be suited to the role.

Every autistic person is different, and has different skills, interests, personal qualities and career ambitions. Your organisation's culture will shape both how people might react to somebody's decision to disclose their difference or disability, like an autism diagnosis, as well as how managers and colleagues treat employees with disabilities more generally. An open and inclusive workplace culture with an accepting attitude towards difference will encourage more people to be open about any differences or disabilities they may have.

- When recruiting, try to recruit a person for their skills, experience and personal qualities they can bring to the role. Whilst being disabled or autistic is a key part of who they are, it is far from the only part of themselves that they will show at work, and many autistic people and disabled people want the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and show that they can be a valued and important employee for your organisation.

Ensure that your organisation sets out the skills and qualifications required for the job from the outset and provide as much information in advance as possible, particularly around the interview process, how to get to the workplace/interview venue.

- Use plain language throughout your organisation's materials, from induction manuals to application forms to policies and procedures, as much as possible. Try to avoid jargon or acronyms if possible, but if your organisation uses any jargon or terminology, be sure to explain these terms when they're being used, and what they mean.

- Ensure that your organisation's services, processes, buildings and supports are fully accessible to disabled people, including autistic staff. This includes conducting sensory audits of the environment and any technologies used in your organisation to ensure that sensory processing issues with any lights, noises, temperature, or distractions, and what you can do to address these sensory issues.
- Advertise these accessible services and supports on your website, throughout your organisation, in your organisation's communications with the public, such as social media, the organisation's, website, etc.
- Clearly set out the competencies required for the job, from the job advertisement and job specification onwards, and give as much information as possible in advance.
- Trust your recruitment process to select the best person for the job, based on the skills required for the job.
- Provide many opportunities for an autistic person to disclose. Ask prior to the interview, training, the job offer, their first day at work, during performance reviews, etc.
- Be mindful that some autistic people would prefer not to disclose their difference or disability and that it is their prerogative if they don't want to disclose.
- Try to treat any disclosure of a person's difference or disability with the same sensitivity and respect, regardless of the point where the person makes the decision to disclose.
- Create the space for an autistic person to disclose if they feel comfortable and confident enough to do so, and be ready to have the conversation when the moment happens.
- Think about what you really need to know about their difference or disability and how it might impact them at work before asking questions.
- Be aware of the range of supports out there to support disabled people to perform the job. There are a wide range of services and supports to support disabled people at work, and this is always growing as more disabled people are opening up about their experiences.
- Ask for advice from organisations led by disabled people and autistic people, and from the autistic person themselves. This can help you with relevant, practical guidance and advice on how an autistic person can be supported at work.
- Take your time making any decisions when you get disclosure from an autistic person.
- Be clear to everyone on what will happen with the information once the person has disclosed that they're autistic. Any disclosure of a person's disability or difference would need to comply with Data Protection legislation as well as your organisation's policies and procedures about maintaining personal data. This information should not pass to other people without the person's expressed and explicit consent.
- Be as flexible as you can when you wish to accommodate an autistic person. Today's workforce may have a more diverse range of skills, interests and abilities, and many prospective employees want to work for organisations that have a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, and want their companies that are socially inclusive in their outlook, whether it's through promoting social causes, sponsoring a local club or community event or bringing employment to the local community.

8.

Employer supports and Government grants



What supports are available that can support my organisation to recruit autistic talent?

There are a wide range of supports, as well Government organisations and social enterprises that can support your organisation to attract and recruit autistic talent. These supports and organisations are as follows:

Government supports

There are Government supports that your organisation can use to recruit and to retain autistic talent, and to provide Reasonable Accommodations that can support autistic people when they're at work. These include:

- Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant
- Wage Subsidy Scheme
- Employee Retention Grant
- Disability Awareness Support Scheme

Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant

The Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant is available to private-sector employers, employees or self-employed people. This provides a grant of up to €6,350 to make adaptations to the workplace or to purchase adaptive equipment for disabled employees if they are currently working, if they are offered employment or an apprenticeship, changing jobs, or are self-employed.

Workplace adaptations may include adjustments made to the building or environment, like ramps or disabled toilets. It may also include assistive technology such as voice synthesisers, text-to-speech software, picture cue or scheduling software, or access to noise-cancelling headphones or headsets. It may also include the procurement of training aimed at supporting the organisation or the employee to use the adaptations or supports requested by the employee. Your organisation can also avail of additional funding of up to €9,523 if the organisation needs specialist training to use the technology the employee has requested that has been acquired through the Grant.

Employee Retention Grant

The Employee Retention Grant helps private-sector employers to keep employees who acquire an illness, condition or disability which impacts their ability to do their job. The Grant is available to keep any employee who is working at the organisation, and any level and occupation. The grant helps employers to explore how the employee may be able to remain in the organisation, whether it is by remaining in their current role, making adjustments to some of their job duties, or by moving to a different role within the organisation that matches their skills and talents. **The Grant provides funding to organisations who wish to:**

- Identify what training and/or accommodations might be helpful to allow the employee to remain in their current role within the organisation.
- Provide training for the employee so that they can take up another position within the organisation.

Disability Awareness Support Scheme

The Disability Awareness Support Scheme is available to private sector companies who are interested in employing or retaining disabled people. The Scheme funds up to 90% of costs in the first year, and up to 80% of costs in subsequent years of up to €20,000 for providing disability awareness training, with additional funding available for providing materials related to the training. Other supports within the Reasonable Accommodation Fund might also be useful supports for including autistic and disabled talent in your organisation. These include the Job Interview Interpreter Grant, which can support your organisation to bring in an interpreter for a Deaf or hard-of-hearing candidate who is going through the interview or induction and onboarding process. This also includes the Personal Reader Grant, which allows a blind or low-vision employee working in the private sector to employ a Personal Reader who supports them with reading materials related to their job.

Wage Subsidy Scheme

The Wage Subsidy Scheme is a financial incentive which supports private-sector employers to employ disabled workers for more than 20 hours per week. The employee on the Scheme must be on the same terms and conditions as non-disabled employees performing the same role, and they must be paid the same rate for the same job in their field.

There are three strands to this Scheme which employers can access:

- Strand I - Is a general subsidy that an employer can avail of for any disabled employee who is working between 21 and 39 hours per week, and whose perceived productivity shortfall is in excess of 20% when compared to a non-disabled peer. The rate of subsidy is €5.30 per hour and is based on the number of hours worked. Based on a 39-hour working week, you can avail of a maximum total annual subsidy of €10,748 per year.
- Strand II – Depending on the total number of disabled workers, the employer can apply for a grant to cover additional costs. This ranges from an additional 10% for 3-6 employees to a maximum of 50% of the wage subsidy for 23+ disabled employees.
- Strand III – Where 30 or more disabled people are employed within your organisation, employers can avail of a grant of €30,000 per year. This grant assists with the cost of employing an Employment Assistance Officer.

JobsPlus

JobsPlus provides financial support to private-sector employers who provide employment opportunities to people who are long-term unemployed through cash payments to offset wage costs. This would include disabled people and autistic people who would be receiving Jobseekers Benefit or Jobseekers Allowance,

but not Disability Allowance. It aims to support employers to recruit talent who might be out of work for a long time, or who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to showcase their talents in a workplace setting.

As of August 1st 2020, employers who recruit talent from this pool would be entitled to the following:

- Jobseekers under 30 years of age, who are on the live register and are unemployed for at least 104 days in the previous 6 months, or in receipt of Covid Pandemic Unemployment Payment: €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Jobseekers between 30 and 50 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 312 days in the previous 18 months, or in receipt of Covid Pandemic Unemployment Payment: €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Persons with refugee status and in receipt of jobseekers allowance (no qualifying period applies): €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Former one parent family payment recipients whose youngest child is between 7 and 14 years old, who transfer to the live register and are now receiving Jobseekers Allowance: €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Jobseekers who are under 50 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 936 days in the previous 42 months: €10,000 payable over 2 years.
- Jobseekers who are over 50 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 312 days in the previous 18 months: €10,000 payable over 2 years.

Jobseekers not in receipt of jobseekers payment and signing for PRSI jobseeker credits will also be eligible once they are on the live register for the required number of days.

How can I apply for government supports?

There are a number of ways in which you can apply to avail of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund.

The first is to get in contact with your local Intreo or Department of Social Protection office, which will have a designated officer who is responsible for managing employment supports for people with disabilities. They can signpost your business to the supports you need. You can find a list of the designated persons and their contact details [here](#).

The second way is to complete an application process for the scheme that you wish to apply for, which we will set out for each Grant below:

How can I apply for the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant?

You can complete the forms for the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant and send them to your local Intreo office or to your assigned Case Officer. Section 1 of the form asks your organisation to provide details of your organisation and what your employee needs. Section 2 of the form asks you to provide details on what changes you propose to make and how your organisation wishes to use the amount requested in the Grant.

For the Grant, the Intreo or your Case Officer will ask your organisation to identify the changes the employee needs. You will also need to submit medical evidence that the adjustment you're looking for is needed in order to ensure that the employee can remain in their current job.

If there are any changes made to the workplace environment, you may need to include proposals for how the changes are going to be made, as well as indicate a timeline for how long the changes are going to take. A Case Officer from the department meets the applicant to review the application. The department

pays a grant to the applicant to cover the costs agreed upon between your organisation and the department. If the total amount claimed is:

- Under €700, your organisation would need to submit one quotation.
- Between €700 and €1,500, your organisation would need to submit two quotations.
- Over €1,500, your organisation would need to submit three quotations.

How can I apply for the Employee Retention Grant?

To apply for the Employee Retention Grant, you need to complete the Claim Form, and send the completed form to your local Intreo or Department of Social Protection office. Further information on the application process used in the Employee Retention Grant, as well as the conditions on which the Grant will be granted, can be found [here](#).

How can I apply for the Disability Awareness Support Scheme?

To apply for the Disability Awareness Support Scheme, you will need to contact your local Intreo or Department of Social Protection office and they will take you through the process.

How can I apply for JobsPlus?

To apply for JobsPlus, first, you will need to register on the Department of Social Protection website using this [link](#). JobsPlus is open to all private-sector employers. In order to qualify, an employer must offer full-time employment (of at least 30 hours per week), over at least four days per week to candidates.

How can I apply for the Wage Subsidy Scheme?

There are a number of steps both your organisation as an employer and the employee need to take in order to avail of the Wage Subsidy Scheme:

- The employee needs to fill in the Employee Application Form of the Wage Subsidy Scheme. They will also need to meet with a Case Officer from their Department of Social Protection branch to register as an employee with a disability on the Wage Subsidy Scheme system.
- The employer needs to fill out the Employer Application Form of the Wage Subsidy Scheme. You may also need to fill an EFT Bank Mandate attached to the scheme.
- Both you and the employee will need to agree that the employee will have 20% or less productivity than a non-disabled colleague. You will need to fill out a Productivity Level Report Form, signed by both the employer and employee. If the employee is not in receipt of a Disability Payment from the Department of Social Protection, you may also need to have the employee's doctor complete a Medical and Functional Capacity Report and return this to you for the application.
- Your organisation will need to provide Tax Clearance so that the Department can pay the Subsidy.
- Your organisation must provide a signed Contract of Employment, detailing the terms and conditions of employment. This needs to include gross wage or salary, job description, annual leave, sick leave and maternity/parental leave the employee may be entitled to. The contract for the employee's job must be for a minimum of 6 months.
- If your organisation is recruiting 30 or more disabled

employees and wishes to apply for the Grant to recruit an Employment Assistance Officer, they can find the form [here](#).

If the Department of Social Protection approves the application, they will write to the employer and employee confirming this and include the terms under which the Wage Subsidy Scheme will be paid whilst the employee is with your organisation.



What other supports can I avail of?

There are not just Government Schemes your organisation can use to attract and support autistic talent. There are also a number of Government and outside organisations your business or organisation can use to support the recruitment and retention of autistic talent:

Intreo

Intreo is the State agency that acts as a point of contact for employment and income support for employers across the country. They also manage the Reasonable Accommodation Fund, and support employers through initiatives such as the EmployAbility Service:

www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/fb84c0-intreo

EmployAbility

EmployAbility is a service funded by the Department of Social Protection that can support people with disabilities to find work in their community through Supported Employment, as well as a free recruitment and employment service. EmployAbility also provides advice on employment grants and supports, job-matching service, as well as access to support from Job Coaches who support both jobseekers and employers. There are 23 EmployAbility Services nationwide, and you can find their details about your EmployAbility in your local area here:

www.gov.ie/en/publication/28d5a6-list-ofemployability-organisations

Specialisterne Ireland

Specialisterne Ireland is a recruitment consultancy that recruits and supports talented autistic and neurodivergent adults to find employment in a career that they can thrive in. They offer a wide range of supports to both employees and employers alike. They support employees to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and discuss their options if on disclosure and on requesting reasonable accommodations. For employers, Specialisterne provides a pool of talented

candidates for roles, provides training to managers on conducting autism-friendly interviews, and provides advice on applying reasonable accommodations. They also provide ongoing support to employers and employees: www.specialisterne.ie

Open Doors Initiative

The Open Doors Initiative is a broad coalition of partners across business and the community and voluntary sector which supports people who might face disadvantages to entering employment, including people with disabilities, refugees and young people with educational barriers to secure employment and develop their career. These supports include an employability platform which provides online training to young people, internship programmes supporting autistic people, work experience programmes for people from immigrant or refugee background, hospitality training and mentoring for unemployed people and employment supports to assist people with disabilities to obtain employment:

www.opendoorsinitiative.ie

Employers for Change

This is an employer disability information service from the OpenDoors Initiative, which provides advice and guidance to employers seeking to recruit, employ, manage and retain people with disabilities and build a diverse and inclusive workforce. It also provides a portal which provides guidance on a wide range of issues for how to support people with disabilities at work, from language, disclosure to grants and supports which can help your organisation to secure reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities: www.employersforchange.ie

WALK

WALK is a non-profit organisation based in Dublin that aims to provide personcentred supports to people with a wide range of disabilities to live in the community. This include a range of Supported

Employment programmes which allows people with intellectual disabilities and autistic people with high support needs to fulfil their employment and career ambitions by supporting them to realise their potential, access opportunities and build their own natural supports: www.walk.ie

Not So Different

Not So Different is a social enterprise based in Dublin which aims to bridge the gap between third-level and employment for neurodivergent graduates. They provide support for neurodivergent people who wish to pursue a career in the creative industries. As well as providing training and in-person support, they run the Creative Ability programme which supports students to develop and showcase their talents through community projects and avail of employment supports, including mentoring from industry professionals: www.notsodifferent.ie

AHEAD

AHEAD is a nonprofit organisation that aims to build inclusive environments and help college graduates look for employment opportunities for people with disabilities. AHEAD provides information to disabled students and graduates on a wide range of issues related to disability, contributes to national policy on employment. AHEAD also supports disabled graduates to find employment through the WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) Programme: www.ahead.ie

National Learning Network

The National Learning Network provides training and support services to people with disabilities, as well as people who require more specialist support. With over 50 centres nationwide, the NLN provide certified 140 training courses in a wide range of industries, as well as providing one-to-one support, career guidance and personal development to support learners to succeed in their chosen career:

www.rehab.ie/national-learning-network

This is just a sample of some of the support you can avail of to attract and support autistic talent.

To find out about training and employment services supporting autistic people in your community, you can head to:

www.asiam.ie/find-help/?

[support_cate=trainingcollege-employment-services](http://www.asiam.ie/find-help/?support_cate=trainingcollege-employment-services)



9. The AsIAM Adult Support and Employment Department



The ASIam Adult Support and Employment Department

ASIam has two teams that can support your organisation to recruit and retain autistic people, our Adult Support and Employment Department and our Training and Accreditation Department. As an autistic-led, not-for-profit autism advocacy organisation with half our staff being either autistic or neurodivergent, we have the knowledge and expertise to help your business tap into the unlimited potential of embracing autism and neurodiversity.

ASIam Adult Support and Employment Department

ASIam Adult Support and Employment Department supports employers to recruit and retain autistic people. Our Adult Support and Employment Department can provide training, advice, and guidance to help you build an autism friendly workplace and to develop a more inclusive organisational culture for autistic and neurodivergent talent, which benefits from the strengths that autistic people can bring to the workplace. We can also help train staff through the use of our digital badges. We also work with autistic people who wish to find work by providing advice and support on the recruitment process including support with preparing CVs and applications, preparing for interviews, and for any next steps in the recruitment process.

ASIam Training and Accreditation Department

Our Training and Accreditation Department can also support organisations nationwide to become more autism-friendly through our online and in-person Autism Acceptance and Understanding Training and Accreditation programmes. We can deliver Autism Acceptance and Understanding Training in-person or remotely to staff, and we have a range of Online Training packages that can help your organisation to embrace autism and neurodiversity. We also run Autism-Friendly Accreditation programmes which can support your organisation to become more autism-friendly using best practices on autism inclusion in your industry.

Please get in touch with us if you wish to learn more about how we can support you. You can email us at info@asiam.ie for more information or visit our website at www.asiam.ie.



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IrishJobs & AsIAM Employer Masterclass Webinars

IrishJobs and AsIAM have produced a series for **Employer Masterclasses** covering a range of topics related to recruiting and hiring autistic people including:

- Recruiting Autistic Talent.
- Workplace culture and attitudes to neurodiversity.
- Reasonable accommodations, preferences and needs .
- Self-Advocacy in the workplace.
- Career progression and personal development.
- Creating an autism-friendly workplace.

To watch this masterclasses on youtube click [here](#)



Thank you



IRISHJOBS.IE