

Resource for Interviews

Navigating the workplace

Many autistic people worry about life in the workplace.

There can be worries about your abilities to complete a task, to get on with colleagues or maybe even feelings worried about being the only autistic person.

Often autistic people are aware that there is legislation that protects us, but it can be difficult to understand and feel like a lot to take in.

Ultimately it can be difficult to know where to start. In this guidance we are going to breakdown some of that guidance into more manageable chunks.

Should I disclose my autism

The decision to disclose being autistic is entirely your own.

Some people feel an employer will not employ them because they are autistic, and they therefore do not disclose. Although worries around discrimination are valid it is important to consider that if a workplace holds those views is that somewhere that you would like to work? Additionally, if you need support in the future would you feel comfortable to go to them and disclose being autistic or would you continue to struggle?

Workplaces must make reasonable adjustments for their staff, where they need it. If we do not have conversation with employers about adjustments, they may be unaware that we could or are finding something difficult and therefore do not provide the support. Therefore, being open and honest with your employer about being autistic can allow you to work collaboratively to get the best support for you in the workplace, where you need it, to be able to thrive. Additionally, if you have robust methods of supporting yourself already having the conversation with employers may allow you to do those things without being questioned. Furthermore, disclosing being autistic can elevate the weight of feeling you are keeping a secret and you can focus on your work.

Remember! You can disclose your autism at any point. This includes during application, at or after interview and during your employment.

Interview

Interviews can cause anxiety for neurodivergent people and neurotypicals. Preparation can be helpful in reducing anxiety and helping the interview experience be a positive one.

Ways in which you could be more prepared are:

- Ask for questions in advance of the interview. This may enable you to process the questions better and consider your responses.
- Ask for the interview format in more detail. Some interviews occur over several days/phases, so it is important to understand what to expect from the interview.
- Bring support with you to the interview (discuss this with the employer beforehand)
- Ask for any other reasonable adjust you feel you might need.

Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace

Reasonable adjustments are adaptations that your workplace puts into place to support you. Your employer is legally required to make these adjustments.

The term reasonable adjustments can be difficult to understand as what is 'reasonable' is relative to your job role. There is no specific lists of adjustment per job or organisation as adjustments unique for that individual. It is important that you and your employer work positively together with the aim of finding adjustments that work. Establishing reasonable adjustments is a collaborative approach as opposed to you bringing the ideas and the employer agreeing or disagreeing.

Example of a scenario reasonable adjustment

Who do I talk to about workplace adjustments?

Line Manager

Human Recourses (HR)

Social considerations in the workplace

Ask about the unwritten rules (tea and coffee rota/volume level in the office/ the do's and don'ts). There can be 'a way' or 'culture' within the workplace which is often established without a set of formal rules. It can be difficult to work these out alone. Therefore, to avoid any disputes over these unwritten rules it can be an idea to ask your employer, line manager or colleagues about these rules. You can ask for them in a written format if you prefer. This may also help others who are joining

the workplace. You can ask to be assigned a mentor at work; this can be a colleague who you see regularly. Often this person can help with explaining the work etiquette!

Bullying in the workplace can happen. If anyone has said or done anything that has made you feel uncomfortable you must report this to your line manager or HR as soon as possible. This will allow the issue to be resolved quickly and prevent ongoing and persistent issues (bullying). There is no specific definition of what can be classed as bullying but if you have been made to feel uncomfortable then it is important that you report this.

Self-Support

- Consider what strategies you already use in day-to-day life and if you could use those within the workplace
- Ensure that you have time for well-being in your day.
- Establish positive work/life balance to reduce stress and avoid burnout.
- Be open and honest with your employers when and where you feel you can.
- Accept you may not have all the answers yet! You may need to work together to find method and ways that work best for you. You do not need to be perfect.

What if I am self-diagnosed or seeking diagnosis?

Once again, the decision to disclose being autistic to your employer is yours. As explained about it can be beneficial to be open and honest with your employer to support you. If you are self-diagnosed or seeking diagnosis your rights are the same. Ultimately, if you have areas that you need support with your employer has to provide those reasonable adjustments for you regardless of the reasons.

