



Workplace Adjustments: Lived Experience Examples

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The importance of workplace adjustments

Creating an inclusive and supportive workplace benefits everyone. This document shares real examples of how employers have made reasonable adjustments to support staff with health conditions, disabilities, and neurodiverse needs. These lived experiences show that many adjustments are simple, low-cost changes that can make a big difference to people's comfort, confidence, and ability to do their best work.

Each example highlights practical solutions, key considerations for employers, and the positive outcomes that followed. Together, they show that when organisations listen, adapt, and work collaboratively with staff, the results are improved wellbeing, stronger performance, and a more positive workplace culture for all.

Please note that all the names included in the case studies are fictional, to protect the identity of the person who has shared their experience.

Example 1: Making the environment wheelchair accessible for an interview

Overview of needs

Daniel has an interview at a large organisation for the role of social media manager. He has a physical impairment effecting his mobility and uses a wheelchair. He informed them he requires step-free access and is unable to open doors himself if they are not power assisted.

Adjustments put in place

- A temporary ramp was provided at the main entrance, and a member of staff was ready to greet and support Daniel when he arrived.
- Staff moved furniture around in the interview room to ensure there was enough turning space for a wheelchair and optional desk heights.
- Upon employment, a workspace on the ground floor was provided and the organisation completed an accessibility audit.

Key considerations for employers

Always review building regulations and conduct an accessibility audit before making permanent structural changes. Temporary ramps, support from staff and rearrangement of furniture can offer effective interim solutions.

Outcomes

- Daniel was able to attend his interview and reduce stress levels by not experiencing accessibility issues when he arrived.
- Daniel has a workspace that is accessible and the organisation are exploring further permanent adaptations such as ramps and power assisted doors.
- The accessibility improvements will benefit other staff and visitors, creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

Example 2: Changing the sensory environment to reduce noise distraction

Overview of needs

Aisha is a call handler who is neurodivergent. She works in a busy contact centre and experienced difficulties concentrating due to background noise. This sensory distraction led to slower call handling and increased fatigue throughout the day.

Adjustments put in place

- Provided noise-cancelling headphones to reduce background noise.
- Allocated a quieter desk away from the busiest area of the office.
- Created a designated 'quiet space' where staff can take short breaks when needed.

Key considerations for employers

Relocation or equipment changes are often low-cost but can have a high impact. Quiet spaces can be a shared wellbeing area for all staff, not only those with specific adjustments.

Outcomes

- Call handling times improved and accuracy increased.
- Reported stress levels reduced, supporting better overall wellbeing.
- The adjustments also benefited other staff who used the quiet space.

Example 3: Making communication inclusive for someone with a hearing impairment.

Overview of needs

Andrea is a customer service coordinator and has a hearing impairment. She works in a busy team and uses hearing aids. Background noise, poor acoustics, and inconsistent lighting made it difficult to follow discussions, especially in meetings or phone calls.

Adjustments put in place

- Introduced hearing-aid compatible phones and live captioning on video calls and provided BSL interpreters for larger meetings and events.
- Improved lighting and acoustics to support lip reading.
- Agreed a team communication protocol, using instant messaging for quick updates and written confirmation of key points.
- Delivered staff training on clear communication and inclusive meeting practices.

Key considerations for employers

Employers should check caption accuracy and share written summaries after meetings to ensure clarity. Maintaining good lighting and ensuring speakers are visible supports lip reading. It's important to ask individuals about their preferred communication methods rather than assuming needs.

Outcomes

- Andrea gained confidence in meetings and experienced fewer communication barriers.
- Captions and written follow-ups improved clarity across the team, leading to stronger inclusion and collaboration.

Example 4: Supporting cognitive and executive function for someone who has ADHD.

Overview of needs

Liam is a community sports coordinator and has ADHD. He coordinates sports sessions and manages a team of assistants. He found it difficult to sustain attention, plan, and manage overlapping schedules. The noisy, high-activity gym office made it hard to focus and increased fatigue.

Adjustments put in place

- Introduced ‘walk and talk’ meetings and movement breaks.
- Provided a quiet workspace for planning and admin tasks.
- Broke tasks into clear steps with written instructions and meeting summaries.
- Allowed extra processing time and use of discreet fidget tools.
- Held regular check-ins to review progress and priorities.

Key considerations for employers

Plan high-focus work for optimal times and reduce environmental distractions. Use written summaries, reminders, and simple digital tools to support the organisation. Encourage colleagues to capture meeting notes and use clear, flexible communication methods to reinforce understanding.

Outcomes

- Liam completes tasks more efficiently and with less stress.
- Focus and accuracy improved during meetings and planning.
- Session delivery and teamwork strengthened, and Liam felt more confident and organised.

Example 5: Adjusting working hours to support fatigue management

Overview of needs

Sam is a project administrator and has Multiple Sclerosis. They experienced fatigue as a significant challenge to working full-time, particularly in the afternoons. This made it difficult to maintain energy levels and productivity later in the day.

Adjustments put in place

- Introduced a flexible working schedule: 8am–2pm on site, with flexibility to complete occasional tasks remotely.
- Scheduled meetings earlier in the day to align with Sam's peak energy levels.

Key considerations for employers

Simple scheduling changes, supported by regular review discussions, can significantly improve both employee wellbeing and team productivity.

Outcomes

- Sam reported feeling more productive and less anxious about managing their fatigue.
- Absence due to ill health decreased by 40% over a six-month period.
- The wider team benefited from clearer meeting planning and improved workload distribution.

Example 6: Supporting mental health and recovery

Overview of needs

Alex is an administrative officer. After a period of high workload and personal stress, they experienced symptoms of depression, affecting focus, motivation, and confidence. Managing detailed tasks, emails, and deadlines became difficult during recovery.

Adjustments put in place

- Regular one-to-one supervision to review workload and wellbeing.
- Reduced hours temporarily and agreed a return-to-work plan with clear goals and review points.
- Provided flexible working, allowing home and office days for balance.
- Offered access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
- Allowed time for medical appointments and short desk breaks.

Key considerations for employers

Employers should foster an open, supportive culture where mental health can be discussed without stigma. Regular workload reviews, flexibility, and use of support services such as EAPs and Occupational Health can aid recovery.

Outcomes

- Alex felt supported and confident returning to work, with reduced anxiety.
- Absence levels decreased as wellbeing improved.
- The team became more open about mental health, promoting a supportive culture.

Example 7: Supporting a person who is neurodivergent in a busy sports centre

Overview of needs

Jordan is a fitness coach and is Autistic. He works at a busy sports centre and was finding constant noise, bright lighting, and sudden schedule changes caused sensory overload and fatigue. Fast-paced meetings and short-notice agendas also made it hard to process information and contribute effectively.

Adjustments put in place

- Provided noise-cancelling headphones and a quiet workspace.
- Shared weekly timetables, meeting agendas, and slides in advance.
- Allowed flexibility around eye contact and social activities.
- Clear written task lists with key points highlighted and written summaries after meetings.

Key considerations for employers

Sensory factors such as lighting, noise, and routine changes can affect focus and wellbeing. Sharing information in advance, offering quiet spaces, and keeping communication clear and predictable make workplaces more inclusive. Simple, collaborative adjustments often benefit the whole team.

Outcomes

- Jordan felt more focused, less fatigued, and more confident in meetings.
- Clients and colleagues benefited from clearer structures and communication.
- The team became more aware of neurodiversity, leading to wider adoption of inclusive practices.

Example 8: Supporting someone with travel anxiety

Overview of needs

Carol is a Peer Advocate who normally works from home. She needed to travel a significant distance and stay overnight, to attend a work meeting, which she was extremely anxious about. Carol had never been there before and had to use multiple types of public transport to get there. She was particularly nervous about using the underground for the first time by herself.

Adjustments put in place

- The addresses of the train stations, hotel and office she had to get to were provided in advance.
- Her supervisor went through the journey that she would take step by step and explained the different possible train times.
- Her supervisor made themselves available on the phone for the journey so support could be given if needed.

Key considerations for employers

Forward planning such as providing clear travel guidance and going through the steps of a journey can be key to reducing anxiety. Having a 'buddy' system for travel can benefit all staff to feel safer.

Outcomes

- Carol was able to attend the meeting in person which supported relationship building.
- Carol now feels more confident about travelling again for work.
- The organisation gained greater awareness of travel and accessibility needs across its workforce.

Example 9: Supporting someone with a visual impairment

Overview of needs

Natalie works in a busy organisation, frequently attending online meetings and completing written work on her laptop. Natalie is registered severely sight impaired and uses a screen reader on her laptop and phone.

Inaccessible documents and visually focused online presentations can sometimes hinder her progress and understanding of certain tasks.

Adjustments put in place

- Training delivered to staff around accessibility tools such as using alt text for image descriptions.
- All staff and colleagues advised around sending presentations out before meetings to allow time for information to be read prior to the meeting.
- All layouts and formatting of documents requiring data input simplified to allow for easy navigation when using keyboard-only functions.

Key considerations for employers

Always discuss the individual's preferred communication method and their level of sight, including how the impairment affects workplace duties. With the employee's permission, share these preferences with relevant colleagues. Always check understanding of tasks and documentation.

Outcomes

- Natalie gained confidence completing work as accessibility considerations had been put into place.

- Managers and colleagues felt more confident supporting Natalie due to training and open discussions on inclusive communication and working environments.

Conclusion

These case studies show that workplace adjustments don't have to be complex or costly to make a real difference. Taking the time to understand individual needs, working together on practical solutions, and reviewing them regularly helps everyone feel valued and supported.

When employers create an environment where staff can thrive – whatever their health condition or disability – the benefits extend far beyond the individual. Teams become stronger, productivity improves, and the whole organisation gains from a more inclusive and positive culture.

Now is a great time to start the conversation. Review your current practices, talk openly with your staff, and explore what small changes could make a big difference. Inclusive workplaces don't just happen – they're built through everyday actions that show people matter.