

FACTSHEET 3

What kind of work can a person with a learning disability do?

People with a learning disability are all individuals with different skills so they will be able to do many different kinds of jobs. While we would encourage you to keep an open mind about what each individual can offer, there are some general guidelines about the sort of jobs you might be able to open up to candidates with a learning disability.

The types of jobs that could most easily be made accessible to people with a learning disability include:

- jobs that require practical skills that can be learned through practice and repetition
- jobs that do not require high level qualifications
- jobs that do not require a driving licence
- jobs that have fixed elements and only require a little multitasking
- jobs within teams where tasks can be shared and support can be offered.

Have you heard about job carving?

One approach which often proves helpful in employing people with a learning disability is called job carving. Instead of fitting a person into a rigid job description, it can be much more effective to identify different tasks that a person with a learning disability can do, and 'carve' out a job from these different tasks.

This might involve freeing up the receptionist from doing the mail distribution or freeing up the office manager from stuffing envelopes and data entry. All of the tasks should be genuine business needs for the employer that the employee with a learning disability could usefully do.

Would you like a more productive workforce?

If skilled staff are having to do basic tasks in their roles that take up their time and productivity, why not carve out the basic functions from multiple staff to create a new role for someone with a learning disability? By freeing up time for the skilled staff they can focus on the tasks they're good at which could mean the new role is paid for through increased productivity.

In an office or administrative setting, examples of tasks which could be carved out of existing jobs might include:

- data entry
- sending out pay slips/post
- compiling information packs
- handing out the post
- photocopying for large mail-outs
- putting labels onto envelopes
- filing
- answering the phone and taking messages.

In a retail setting, examples of tasks which could be carved out of existing jobs might include:

- stock replenishment
- helping shoppers find goods
- facing up stock
- pricing goods
- warehouse/stock control.

These responsibilities could form a role for someone who would take great pride in performing them. Your business would run more efficiently, with fewer tasks being left to the last minute.

Does every member of staff need to do every part of the role?

Where a new member of staff may be expected to perform a variety of tasks from day one, it is often more appropriate to stagger progression for people with a learning disability. Once they are confident performing one task, they can go on to learn the next.

Many people with a learning disability will have little or no experience of paid work, but a work setting where they can perform practical, hands-on tasks is often the best environment for them. Once the individual has developed their skills in a number of particular areas, they can then be supported to gain promotion and extend those skills.

Remember: everyone with a learning disability is an individual, and will bring different skills and talents to the workplace.

A learning disability can be mild, moderate or severe – so some people with a learning disability can do more complex tasks while others will need more basic responsibilities. Job carving will not be necessary for every person with a learning disability.

Supported employment agencies, such as Mencap, can guide employers further and can help to match the right person to the right job.