

FACTSHEET 6

Best practice in employing people with a learning disability

For the small percentage of people with a learning disability who do work, many are poorly paid, excluded from opportunities for promotion, or in jobs that do not match their skills or support needs. Many work very few hours a week and do not get the opportunity to build up their hours. When things are done right, people with a learning disability thrive in the work environment. When things are done badly, a lot of potential and talent goes to waste.

Here is some best practice guidance for employing people with a learning disability.

Learning disability awareness training

Providing learning disability awareness training to the team that will be working alongside someone with a learning disability can make sure the person is brought into a welcoming and enlightened environment. Mencap can offer training to your organisation to help you learn more about learning disability and be more confident in employing someone.

Job matching: The right person for the right job

Giving someone a job out of altruism or sympathy is unnecessary and unlikely to lead to a successful outcome. Mencap will take time to understand your business and what you need from your employees. We will work with you to explore potential roles and to explore job carving opportunities. We will help you to match an appropriate employee to your business needs.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments should be provided and employers should take the initiative in asking an employee with a learning disability if there is anything that could help them to do the job.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include provision of job coaches, supporters, buddies, accessible information, job carving and adjustments to recruitment procedures. None of these adjustments is costly and many of them would benefit existing employees.

Pay the going rate for the job

A candidate with a learning disability should be paid the same as other employees for the same work. It is not acceptable to pay less on the

assumption that a person's output will be lower. The national minimum wage should be paid as a minimum, regardless of output.

Volunteering and work experience

Volunteering opportunities in not-for-profit organisations can be rewarding and valuable experience for people with a learning disability. However, people with a learning disability should not be volunteering indefinitely for commercial organisations. Good practice would dictate that such placements be temporary and should take the form of time-limited work experience placements, as a forerunner to paid work.

If a candidate with a learning disability starts work with you on a voluntary basis, the position should either end or progress to paid work. Paying a person for some of their work and treating the rest as 'volunteering' is never acceptable. Work experience placements should also end or lead to paid work.

Don't forget Mencap and Inclusive Employers' Learning Disability Work Experience Week. <http://ldwew.co.uk/>

Bullying

Bullying should not be tolerated and should be treated very seriously if reported.

If things go wrong

In all employment situations, things will go wrong from time to time. It is important to remember that you should make reasonable adjustments for a person with a learning disability. This does not mean ignoring behaviour that would be deemed unacceptable for other staff but it does mean addressing issues in a way that will be understood.

This can involve contacting Mencap to request support. Sustaining a job is just as important as getting it in the first place. We can offer advice and support to employers and employees with a learning disability in the event that things are not working as they should be or if there is a change that needs explaining or adapting to.