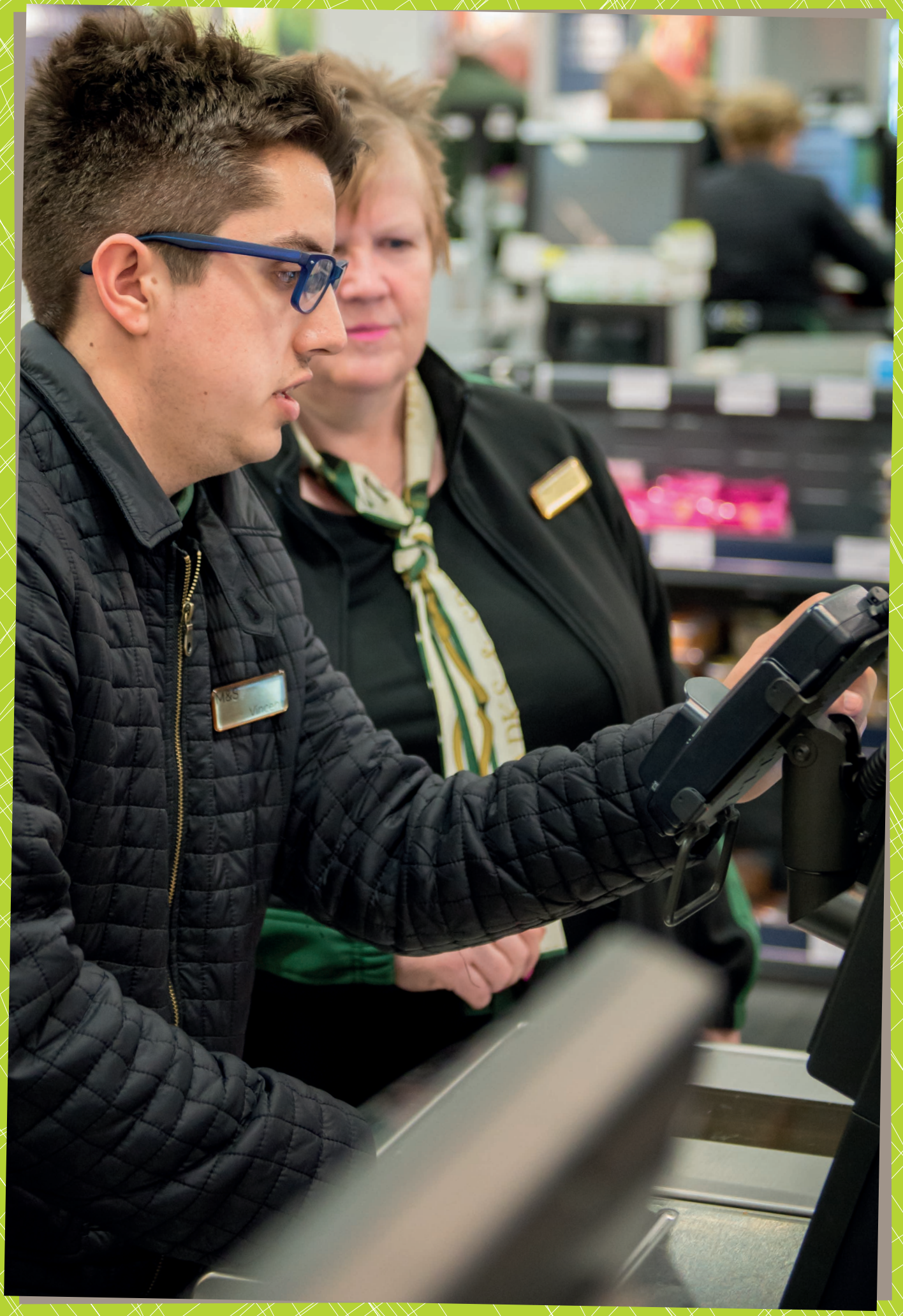
Good for business

The benefits of employing people with a learning disability

disability confident EMPLOYER

mencap Employ Me



What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need a more structured approach to develop new skills than others, understand complicated information and interact with other people. The type of support someone needs depends on the individual. For example, one person may only need help with drafting a job application and at interview. However, others may need help to match their skills and physical abilities to a job they can do, and may need a job coach to give more intensive training in the workplace initially to help the person meet the employer's work quality criteria.

It's important to remember that with the right support, most people with a learning disability in the UK can lead independent lives at home and in work.

Did you know that 1 in 50 people in the UK have a learning disability?[1]

Shockingly, just 6% of those known to local authorities, able to work, are in employment.[2]

We know that with the right support, people with a learning disability can achieve long-term paid employment with progression opportunities, become more independent and live fulfilling, happy lives.

We want to challenge the misconceptions that people have about employing people with a learning disability. That's why we commissioned Dr Stephen Beyer to produce a review of research on the benefits. The key findings of the paper are highlighted in this brochure.

We look forward to working with you to create opportunities that will not only change lives, but benefit your organisation in many ways too.

Full reference of original text: Beyer, S. and Beyer, A. (2017) A Systematic Review of the Literature on the Benefits for Employers of Employing People with Learning Disabilities

1 Emerson, E. and Hatton, C. (2004). Estimating Future Need/Demand for Supports for Adults with Learning Disabilities in England. Lancaster: Institute for Health Research

2 Department of Health (November 2010). The Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework 2015/16

Success stories

"We've gained as much out of our work experience candidates as we hope they have from us. The people who have come to us have performed impressively and Mencap's employability consultants have been exceptional in supporting us throughout."

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP – Raj Panasar, partner

"Vicky is good at what she does and works well under pressure. She's a great team player and just lives and breathes Trinity Leeds, she has a passion for her job."

Land Securities – Steven Wakelin, integrated services manager at Trinity Leeds

"Sam is doing superbly in the role and taking on new responsibilities – and the team around him have been buoyed by his success and its impact on their sense of job satisfaction."

Bespoke Cleaning – Tobias Batkin, managing director

"Our three-year partnership with Mencap has left a big impression on us as a business. Not only have our employees enjoyed meeting some of the people with a learning disability that Mencap supports, and learned a great deal about the challenges they face when trying to find work, it has also given them the opportunity to develop their professional skills. It's been a win-win."

Land Securities – Diana Breeze, HR director

"Thomas was a fantastic addition to the team and had a very positive impact on our staff; boosting morale and raising awareness of what a person with a learning disability can achieve. His support worker visited to provide any support needed, which was really helpful."

Legoland – Gemma Smith, recruitment specialist and Hayley Avis, line manager at Hill Top Cafe

"There are people with a learning disability out there who have loads to offer businesses but are struggling to find work. Colleagues like Charlotte demonstrate that when an opportunity is given, people can become fantastic team members."

Tesco Lichfield Extra – David Harmon, general store manager

"It has been great to see Claire grow in confidence and the positive effect that has on the business and ultimately the community."

Engie – Alvin Martin, grounds and garden supervisor

"The Mencap candidates have made really useful contributions to their teams' work, and we've seen first-hand the benefits of making the effort to break down barriers, being open to their talents and removing stigma."

Wellcome Trust – Ted Smith, director of people and places

"Richard has been a really valuable member of the team. After he joined, our MCM (making customers matter) score was consistently higher which meant that we were able to pass our overall MCM score for the year. I'm happy with his progress and his hard work has already paid off for the rest of the team."

Sainsbury's – Kevin Cook, store manager

"Bethan at Mencap supported me all the way through the interview. I didn't have to fill out an application form. I do cleaning, tidying, dressing the shelves, sweeping inside and outside the store, and I help customers if they have a question."

Richard – customer services assistant at Sainsbury's

Small costs, big benefits

We understand you might be concerned about additional costs to your organisation. But that needn't be a worry, because the adjustments needed when employing a person with a learning disability are easy to implement and low-cost. In fact, on average, adjustment costs are only £75.[3]

There is a legal requirement for employers to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace when employing somebody with a learning disability. But reasonable adjustments do not always cost money – for example, when they are provided by external supported employment services.

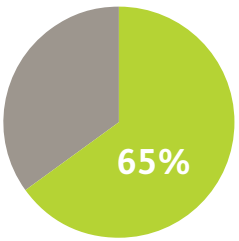
It is important to weigh up the economic benefits and positive impact on your workplace against these costs, which include long-term savings, employee loyalty and improved staff morale.

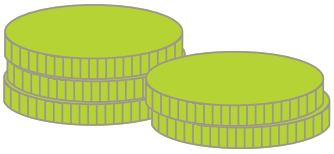
Reasonable adjustments do not always cost money – for example, when they are provided by external supported employment services.

From **2,024** employer records of financial effects of accommodations, **65%** rated these to be cost neutral.[4]

In a survey of **128 employers, (55%)** reported just a **one-time cost** for making reasonable adjustments.[6]

65% of employers disagreed that considerable expense was necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities (including learning disability).[5]





On average, adjustment costs are only **£75**.[3]

3 Disability Rights Commission (2015). Top Tips for Small Employers: A guide to employing disabled people. Available online: http://www.smarttar.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/top_tips_for_small_employers_-_a_guide_to_employing_disabled_people.pdf

4 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Cost of reasonable adjustments, p.27.

5,6 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Cost of reasonable adjustments, p.26.

Economic benefits of employing people with a learning disability

What you might think

"Employing a person with a learning disability will affect my organisation's productivity and financial performance."

What the reality is...

Not true – people with a learning disability can bring real economic benefits which can save you time and money.

Less sickness and days absent

As an employer, you'll know the implications to your organisation when staff are regularly off sick or absent for other reasons. This is a challenge that you are less likely to face when employing a person with a learning disability – and our findings back this up: one study revealed that people with a learning disability stayed in their job 3.5 times longer than their non-disabled co-workers.[7]

Did you know that people with a learning disability generally stay in work longer, take less sick days and are reliable timekeepers?

Our research goes further to suggest there are higher costs incurred by employers through lateness, sick leave and absence by non-disabled workers than employees with a learning disability. In the same study, people with a learning disability had no whole day absences, compared to 1-6 days missed by matched non-disabled co-workers, and they were late only 3 times, compared to 20 times for non-disabled comparators.[8] While this is only one study, it does indicate that people with a learning disability can be reliable members of any workforce, and could save you time and money.

Reduced staff turnover

Employers report that people with a learning disability are often dedicated to their job and reduce staff turnover. This helps cut down recruitment costs for employers, which include advertising a vacancy and salaried time spent reviewing applications, interviewing potential candidates and training. So, if a worker with a learning disability stays in work twice as long as an average comparable non-disabled co-worker, they will have saved the employer two rounds of recruitment cost – and that can be a significant saving.

These benefits appear to be quite appealing to employers. Our research includes one study in which 84 employers from a wide range of industry sectors highlighted regular attendance and staying in the job longer as major benefits of employing people with a learning disability.[9]

7,8 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Reliability of workers, p.20.
9 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Reliability of workers, p.15.

"I believe I can thrive at Kew, it feels very good to be earning money, it helps me to do new things and gives me a sense of achievement. I am excited to further my experience, knowledge and to fulfil my potential. I would like to stay at Kew Gardens until I retire."
Anthony Knight, Arboretum Horticulturist at Kew Gardens

Work performance

Our research tells us that employers are more likely to have a positive view of the work performance and employment costs of people with a learning disability if they have previously employed somebody with a learning disability.

What you might think

"People with a learning disability will struggle to perform effectively in a role at my organisation."

What the reality is...

With the right support, and if placed in a suitable role, people with a learning disability can perform exceptionally well – and they can have a significant positive effect on staff morale.

In one study from our research, 97% of employers said they were likely to hire this group again.[10]

Willing and able to work

We know there is a lack of awareness about learning disability, and this includes limited understanding about what people with a learning disability can do. They represent an untapped resource that may be able to help with difficult to fill, or high turnover, vacancies.

Many studies have found that a high proportion of employees with a disability have their job performance rated as average or above average. For example, in a study of 261 employers, supervisors scored their workers with a learning disability as satisfactory on average in the quality and speed of their work.[11] When asked to compare the overall work performance of workers with a learning disability with their non-disabled co-workers, supervisors scored on average as that there was no significant difference.[12] While this won't always be the case, it does highlight that people with a learning disability are capable of far more than you may have previously thought.

Hardworking and reliable

Many people with a learning disability are fit to work and can do a job well, and can be just as productive at work as people without a learning disability. What's more, in many studies employers reported that staff with a learning disability are friendly and hardworking, too.

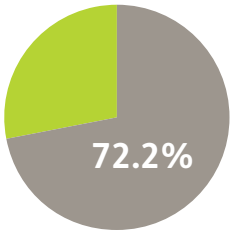
In a number of studies, employees with a disability have been rated higher than those without a disability in terms of attendance and being on time. This means their employers are less likely to incur costs of paying other staff overtime to cover absences.

10 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Economic benefits, p.18
11,12 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Economic benefits, p.14

An historical study found that annual turnover rates for workers with disabilities at Pizza Hut, Inc. was **32%**, compared with **190% for non-disabled workers.**[13]

Champion inclusion and boost staff morale

A number of studies have found that employing people with a disability can help to increase staff morale, which can have a positive contribution on the work output of an organisation.



72.2% of employers in one study regarded the impact on company morale as an "important factor" in deciding to employ people with a learning disability.[14]

Employing people with a learning disability can add real value to your workplace culture. Employers report benefits that include:

- a more diverse workplace
- better co-worker partnerships
- improved attitudes in the company.

Enhance your organisation's reputation

Employing people with a learning disability can promote diversity in the workplace and can help a company to maintain a positive reputation for corporate social responsibility. Some research suggests that a positive public reaction to a company employing people with a disability can help to improve profits.

We believe that all organisations have a responsibility to champion diversity in the workplace and, of course, adhere to the Equality Act 2010. The general public seem to agree: 92% of consumers interviewed in a large study felt more favourable towards companies that hired people with disabilities.[15] What's more, 87% specifically agreed that they would prefer to give their business to companies that hire people with disabilities.[16]

So why not proudly show off your commitment to equal opportunities!

13 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Reliability of workers, p.18.
14 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Productivity and workforce cohesion benefits, p.23.
15,16 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Reputation and customer reaction benefits, p.24.

The added benefits of a more diverse workforce

Many employers view workforce diversity as a strategy for increasing the productivity and competitiveness of their organisation. Employees with a learning disability being able to take on some of the lower-skilled elements of more highly-paid employees' jobs may help to improve overall productivity and cost-effectiveness.

Health and safety: no significant risks

We know that health and safety is an important issue for any organisation, and if rules are not followed then this may result in accidents which can create a reputational or financial cost – such as increased insurance premiums. However, research suggests that there is no significant difference in the number of health and safety accidents between employees with a learning disability and those without a learning disability.[17]

Employees with a learning disability being able to take on some of the lower-skilled elements of more highly-paid employees' jobs may help to **improve overall productivity and cost-effectiveness.**[18]

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Support: how we can make a placement work for you

When employing people with a learning disability, it is important to provide appropriate support and match the individual with a job that suits their needs and skills. Supported employment services, which we offer at Mencap, can help and they are strongly linked to the successful job performance of employees with a learning disability.

Research suggests that once employers have hired somebody with a learning disability, they are more likely to have a positive attitude towards hiring other people with a learning disability in the future. Supported employment services can help this initial hiring to become a reality.

Did you know that employers are more likely to employ people with a learning disability if they have on-going availability of a person to call for assistance? That's what our research tells us, and that's what we can offer you.

17 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Health and safety risks, p.28.
18 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Job carving and assisting productivity of others, p.21.
19 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Reputation and customer reaction benefits, p.24.

What you might think

"My organisation doesn't have the experience, skills or time to provide suitable support to a person with a learning disability in a role."

What the reality is...

You may be better equipped than you think, and even if you're not, Mencap can help with on-the-job support and advice whenever you need it.

Our support

Mencap's employment service, Employ Me, can provide tailored support throughout the entire process – from recruitment through to on-the-job support and beyond. This includes:

- Getting to know your organisation and understanding your needs.
- Helping you make recruitment processes more accessible.
- Finding the right people with suitable skills and interests relevant to a role at your organisation.
- A job coach offering one-to-one support for the individual in the workplace until they are independent.
- Support with making reasonable adjustments.
- Help with making processes and policies more accessible.
- Disability awareness training.
- Ongoing support, whenever you need it.

Any issues, big or small, we're always at the end of the phone.

Employment support services can make a difference

We know that using an employment service is a proven effective method of making placements a success for both parties. A study of 117 employers indicated that using job coaches, or having disability professionals provide assistance to them and employees, is the most helpful way to assist them to employ more people with a learning disability.[20]

What do we mean by reasonable adjustments?

With the right support, people with a learning disability can make fantastic, dedicated, hardworking employees and add real value to your organisation in a number of ways – but that starts with putting the right reasonable adjustments in place. These commonly include things like:

Did you know that adapting a job role to match the needs and skills of an employee with a learning disability may lead to more efficient working practices?

- task-based adjustments and job carving
- changes to work processes and policies
- flexible hours and supervision
- in-work support / job coach - (not additional support costs to the employer)
- providing alternatives to online-only application processes
- offering work trials as an alternative to a formal interview.

20 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Employer views of the support they need to employ people with a learning disability, p.30.

Basically, reasonable adjustments are just little things that can make a big difference; removing barriers that enable individuals to get on with the job they've been employed to do.

Did you know that not all costs of reasonable adjustments will fall on you, the employer?

Getting help with the costs: Access to Work scheme

Access to Work is a discretionary government scheme that pays a grant to employers which can go towards extra employment costs that result from a person's disability. This can offset the cost of putting in place reasonable adjustments, such as a job coach – which is a service we can provide at Mencap (not an additional cost). If required, the scheme can also fund additional equipment or adaptations that might be required in the workplace – so that's one less cost for you to worry about.

Why should you hire a person with a learning disability?

There are so many reasons that we could list here, so we'll give you some examples of what other employers think. A study of 57 employers in Sheffield highlighted their key reasons for employing people with a learning disability,[21] and they include:

- Willingness to learn
- Job satisfaction
- Unlikely to cause trouble
- Hardworking
- Friendliness
- Honesty
- Strength
- Timekeeping
- Reliability
- Dependability
- Motivation
- Sickness record

People with a learning disability can be reliable and dedicated workers who help to improve staff morale, increase diversity in the workplace, reduce staff turnover, and enhance the image and social corporate responsibility of your organisation

While people with a learning disability may need additional supervision and training, they can also be reliable and dedicated workers who help to improve staff morale, increase diversity in the workplace, reduce staff turnover, and enhance the image and social corporate responsibility of your organisation.

Be part of our mission to change attitudes

We already knew that contact in the workplace between people with a learning disability and those without a learning disability can change attitudes and challenge misconceptions – a fact that is now backed up in our research. You can be part of this change and make a real difference.

21 Beyer and Beyer (2017). Economic benefits to employers, p.14.

Taking the next step

Find out how you can take steps toward employing people with a learning disability – get in touch and speak with a member of our team:
07984 391 613
mark.capper@mencap.org.uk

There's lots more employment resources on our website at:
www.mencap.org.uk/employerinfo

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The voice of learning disability