




HEALTH AND SAFETY  
AUTHORITY

## > Employees with Disabilities

An employer's guide to implementing  
inclusive health and safety practices  
for employees with disabilities





Our Vision:  
Healthy, safe and  
productive lives  
and enterprises

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## > Introduction

This is the second version of this guidance document, the first version was developed and published in 2009. Both versions are the result of work by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in consultation with the National Disability Authority (NDA), with assistance from charitable bodies.

The main alterations in this version of the guide are:

- updates to legislation and guidance in the disability sector,
- updates to the resources section,
- additions regarding accommodations, and,
- the addition of a case study on Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The guide addresses aspects of work-related safety, occupational health and facilities management and welfare as they pertain to workplace health and safety for employees with disabilities and aims to assist employers to ensure their health and safety systems of work are inclusive to people with disabilities.

Workplace health and safety covers all stages of employment including the initial recruitment and induction processes. This guide also highlights some of the current legislation regarding health and safety, and employment. It is intended to be a useful resource for owners, managers and employees working in Ireland today.



## ➤ Accommodating disability

### Legislation & other standards

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 states that employers must 'ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees'.

Regulation 25 of the General Application Regulations – Employees with disabilities – states that 'An employer shall ensure that places of work, where necessary, are organised to take account of persons at work with disabilities, in particular as regards doors, passageways, staircases, showers, washbasins, lavatories and workstations used or occupied directly by those persons'.

The Employment Equality Acts oblige employers to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. An employer must take 'appropriate measures' to meet the needs of disabled people in the workforce. Further information is provided later in this guidance and can be found on <https://www.ihrec.ie/>.

The Disability Act 2005 is designed to advance and underpin the participation of persons with disabilities in society, by supporting the provision of disability specific services and improving access to mainstream public services. The Act places significant obligations on public bodies to make buildings and services accessible to people with disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was entered into force in Ireland from 19th April 2018. The purpose of the UNCRPD is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities.

Further information on the Disability Act 2005, UNCRPD and other relevant legislation in the area of disability can be obtained from the National Disability Authority at [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie).

### Disability

Around one in nine Irish people have some form of disability – that could be a physical disability, visual impairment, deaf/hard-of-hearing, intellectual disability, sensory processing difficulties or neurological condition or mental health condition. You may already have employees with disabilities, whether or not those disabilities are readily apparent or known to you. Some people may have more than one disability, which may interact negatively.

Other employees may acquire a disability in the future. About four out of five people with disabilities acquire their disability in adulthood. It makes sense, therefore, to plan and manage for health and safety on an inclusive basis.

### Hidden disability

Some forms of disability are not immediately visible (for example, epilepsy, asthma, mental health conditions like depression or anxiety, neurological conditions like autism or someone who is deaf/hard-of-hearing). Often employees with a 'hidden disability' choose not to disclose their disability because they are concerned that their employer will focus on their disability rather than their ability.

If employees are not comfortable about disclosing a disability, their health and safety needs may not be identified and met. Disclosing a disability should remain a completely personal decision that only the employee should make, and some employees have completely valid reasons for not disclosing their condition. However, we must stress that not reporting their condition makes it more difficult for employers to identify and meet their health and safety needs, and can pose unintended, unforeseen health and safety risks to the workplace.

It is good health and safety practice, therefore, to create a supportive, non-judgmental environment, and to communicate that to all employees. For example using the [Customer Communications Toolkit](http://universaldesign.ie) available at <http://universaldesign.ie>

Considerable research has been conducted on the relationship between employees' wellbeing at work and their work environment. Studies have shown that employees who feel respected in their work environment are more productive and have lower rates of absenteeism (one of the biggest cost items for employers). An inclusive work environment where all employees, including those with disabilities, feel comfortable, included and respected makes good business sense.

Advancements in technology, including assistive technologies, have helped switch the focus from incapacity to capacity for people with disabilities. The on-going growth in assistive technology is playing a significant part in making the workplace more accessible for people with disabilities. People with disabilities can work safely and effectively at many jobs provided that their support needs are accommodated and their needs are built into health and safety planning.



### Accommodating disability at work

Under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2015, unless the costs of doing so are disproportionate, employers are obliged to take appropriate measures - known as 'reasonable accommodation'. These measures enable people with disabilities to have access to employment, to participate or advance in employment and to undergo training. Such measures may include training resources or adaptations to:

- workplace premises in order to make them more accessible for employees with disabilities
- work equipment
- patterns of working time, and
- the distribution of tasks


Practical examples might include:

- a talking lift with tactile floor buttons,
- height-adjustable desks,
- hands-free telephone set and alternative communication applications,
- voice controls where available,
- earlier or later start and finish times, or
- organising the distribution of work tasks in a team so that hard-of-hearing staff members are not expected to take minutes.

An employer is not obliged to provide any facility or treatment that employees can reasonably be expected to provide for themselves.

For instance, if an employee has a health issue which requires an inhaler, or a walking aid, this must be provided for by the employee through their own medical engagement.

Private sector employers may qualify for a Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant from Intreo ([www.Intreo.ie](http://www.Intreo.ie)). Information on other relevant funds, such as the Reasonable Accommodation Fund and the Disability Awareness Support Scheme or allowances can also be found through the Department of Social Protection.



## > Inclusive health and safety

### **Inclusive health and safety**

Employees with disabilities are not a homogeneous group, they are individuals with different strengths and support needs.

In order to develop inclusive health and safety processes, it is good practice to consult those employees who have told you that they have a disability. These staff members know, through their own experiences, how their disability impacts them throughout their lives and what their workplace support needs may be. They will also have insight on the changes or accommodations required to make their workplace inclusive, healthy and safe.

A Universal Design (Design for All) approach considers if the workplace and accommodations can be accessed, understood and used by all employees, including those with disabilities. (<http://universaldesign.ie>)

You may also find it useful to consult with relevant disability organisations found in the 'Further information' and 'Resources' section. Many of these organisations have developed considerable expertise around particular conditions and their related health and safety issues and workplace requirements.

### **Planning and management**

Good planning and effective management are the key elements in developing and maintaining a good, successful health and

safety management system that provides a safe and healthy working environment for everyone. It is important to consider the different needs of all your employees so that health and safety planning and management are fully inclusive of their diverse needs.

It is good practice to ask all employees, during their induction period into a new job and at regular performance review meetings, if they have any particular health or safety requirements, regardless of whether or not you are aware that they have a disability. This creates a good workplace culture of inclusivity whether one has a disability or not.

### **Develop an inclusive policy**

Employers should prepare and produce an inclusive health and safety statement and an inclusive safety policy. A policy on safety, on health, or on managing bullying for instance, forms part of an overall legally required Safety Statement.

Developing this policy involves:

- risk assessment,
- control measures to address identified risks, and
- consultation with employees with disabilities, and with sources of relevant expert advice.



Your risk assessment should take account of any particular risks for employees with disabilities. It is important to identify if there are any particular hazards or risks for staff members with conditions such as:

- restricted mobility if there is a physical impairment,
- limited dexterity,
- impaired vision,
- impaired hearing,
- limited understanding,
- health conditions such as heart problems, epilepsy or asthma, and
- neurological or sensory processing conditions (for instance: autism spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, dyslexia or dyspraxia).

Bearing in mind that some staff members may have hidden or undisclosed disabilities, you must assume that disability is a factor in your health and safety planning.

You should keep written records of risk assessments. These records should be the result of consultation, include inputs from competent personnel and be updated regularly to ensure they are valid for the time period. Risk assessments provide a foundation for the ongoing development of health and safety processes.

Consider what practical steps you can take to minimise the risks you have identified. Control measures are preventive procedures that employers put in place to protect their employees against injury. There are often simple procedures that incur no additional costs, while others do incur costs. Your control measures should include any particular steps that need to be taken to ensure that employees with disabilities remain safe and well at work.

Consult with organisations that provide services for, and work with, people with disabilities in order to help develop and implement the company policy and its control measures.

Ensure you have good systems to communicate the policy clearly to all your employees, including all new staff members using a variety of appropriate media. The Customer Toolkit, available at <http://universaldesign.ie>, is a useful resource in this regard.


### **Implement safe and healthy practices**

Ensure that the safety policies and procedures you have adopted are actually being implemented.

For example, ensure that there are no trailing wires or inappropriately stored boxes, which are a trip hazard for any staff member, but particularly for those with restricted vision or limited mobility. Carry out regular checks, thoroughly investigate any safety lapses and address the causes. Make health and safety everyone's business, and build that into your systems to recognise good performance.

### **Keep the safety policy updated**

Keep your health and safety policy updated through regular reviews. It is good practice to have employees with disabilities represented on your health and safety committee so their lived experience and concerns are always considered as you update your policy and undertake regular safety checks and drills. Representatives should have knowledge on a range of disabilities regarding those most likely to impact on the work activities.



## > Safe evacuation of employees with disabilities

There may be particular challenges in ensuring that all employees with disabilities can exit their place of work safely in the event of an emergency, but these must be met. Different disabilities present different challenges.

- Mobility impairment affects the range or speed of movement to varying degrees.
- Sensory impairment affects the ability to gather information through the senses such as sight or hearing.
- Cognitive or mental health impairment affects the capacity to process information and react appropriately.
- Neurological or sensory impairment effect people's ability to take in information and follow instructions. This may be a factor your workplace needs to pay particular attention to, if there are strong smells, loud noises, or if the workplace is very busy.
- With hidden disabilities, the stress of an emergency situation may trigger a condition such as asthma or heart problems. Some emergency situations may be so stressful for an employee with autism, for instance, that it may be too overwhelming for them to take action in the moment to keep themselves safe.

### **Planning for safe emergency egress**

The key steps in preparing for safe evacuation are:

- initial review of user needs, organisational practice and policies,
- develop an egress policy for your organisation,
- plan for egress,
- implement your egress plan,
- measure the performance of your egress plan, and
- review the performance of your egress plan.

### **Evacuation drills**

Consultation and engagement with employees with disabilities is essential in identifying potential risks. Consult your staff members individually and develop and document Personal Emergency Egress Plans (PEEPs) for individuals who require them.

PEEPs should be developed or modified in response to any issues that emerge during routine fire drills. Regular review of these plans is essential to ensure they are up to date and taking account of any changing needs.

The NDA's *Reasonable Accommodations: Obstacles and Opportunities to the Employment of Persons with a Disability (November 2019)* has more information on this and provides a step-by-step approach to preparing an inclusive evacuation plan. Copies of this publication are available from the NDA and can be downloaded from [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie).

### Examples of risk assessment and control measures

#### Example 1: Landscaping company – employees with intellectual disabilities: risk assessment and control measures

In a landscaping company, employees are responsible for planting, operating leaf shredders and other machinery, trimming lawns and hedges, and spraying plant fertiliser. Some staff members have an intellectual disability. A risk assessment of this work environment for these employees – as with all employees - would assess each employee or activity regarding the following:

- Are all employees trained in the safe use and storage of chemicals and fertilisers?
- Are all employees provided with gloves, masks and other safety equipment that protects them from hazardous materials and machinery?
- Are all employees with access to machinery fully trained in, and aware of, the safety hazards of each machine? Do they know and understand how to operate it safely?
- Do all employees understand the importance of washing their hands after working and before eating?
- Are all employees adequately supported and supervised to ensure that they know the step-by-step procedures required to complete their tasks, including any safety routines?

- Are instructions provided to employees in an easy-to-read format using plain English and visual aids? Is there a staff member delegated to talk people through what is involved?
- Are employees, especially those who may find it hard to remember details and instructions, given a daily run-through on procedures, including safety precautions?
- Is there a buddy system in operation to supervise more hazardous tasks such as loading the shredding machine?
- Is there someone on the staff with responsibility for planning and overseeing health and safety procedures for this work unit?

If any of these criteria are not met, then additional control measures need to be implemented. Control measures for a landscaping company would address the following:

- All employees, including those with disabilities, should receive thorough training in the safest way to operate machinery, such as leaf shredders, and to use equipment such as shears, rakes or lawnmowers.
- Employers should talk through the safety procedures with employees including employees with disabilities. This may be required on a daily basis.
- Safety instructions should be in an easy-to-read format (simple text with pictures) with easy-to-follow visual guidance.
- Standard safe work practices should be set out (for example, always unplug or switch off mowers before clearing surplus grass). Check regularly to see that all staff are following agreed safety procedures.

- No staff member who is taking medication should be permitted to operate hazardous machinery.
- Employees with intellectual disabilities must receive daily and supportive supervision when they begin working in a particular environment so that they become confident in completing their tasks. Easy-to-read task-specific guides can be helpful here, or short explanatory pictorials.
- All employees, including those with intellectual disabilities, should be supervised and assisted by a colleague when initially operating machinery. It is recommended that, where it will not impair safety, and where space allows, employees work in pairs or groups of three so that someone is on hand to raise the alarm and offer immediate assistance in the event of an accident or an emergency.
- Health and safety legislation mandates that some employees must be fully trained in first aid techniques so that they can assist an injured colleague if required.

### **Example 2: Fire alarms for deaf or hard-of-hearing employees - control measures**

Any organisation which employs deaf or hard-of-hearing people or people with sensory disabilities such as autism must introduce appropriate control measures with regard to fire alarms and their use, including impacts of flashing lights etc (see below).

- Make sure fire alarms are regularly maintained and in full working order.
- Provide visual, as well as, audio fire alarms to alert employees with impaired hearing when the alarm is activated. Ensure these alarms are in a prominent

and easily visible position and that all staff members know where the visual alarms are in each room and circulation space.

- Check with deaf or hard-of-hearing employees if they have any tools, or are aware of such tools, to support them to work safely (for example a vibrating pager system would be of benefit in alerting them that a fire alarm has gone off).
- Ensure workplace fire wardens are alerted to the need to warn any employees with impaired hearing or impaired understanding.
- Ensure that all employees are familiar with safe evacuation procedures and the location of, and routes to, all fire exits those exits.
- Conduct regular fire drills and review and act on the results.

### **Example 3: Catering industry: Kitchen work for employees with a variety of disabilities - control measures.**

Control measures in respect of work in kitchens for employees with various disabilities might include taking the following steps (see below).

- Ensure all employees are trained to work safely with sharp knives and other chopping equipment, machinery such as food processors and hot ovens, gas and hot foods and liquids. Employees with hand-eye coordination or motor limitations as part of their disability should not be required to use this equipment. If they do use it occasionally, it should be supervised and more time allocated to their performance of the tasks.

- Set out standard safe work practices using various appropriate media (for example, mandatory wearing of oven gloves when opening the oven) and check regularly to see that all staff are following agreed safety procedures.
- Give all employees a detailed tour of the kitchen to ensure that they know where everything is and to enable employees with vision impairments to orient themselves. Use extra visual aids and strong lighting where needed.
- Provide training and safety materials in formats appropriate to the needs of all staff - for example in large print, in

easy-to-read format (simple text with pictures), electronically, on tape or in Braille if required.

- Place large-print health and safety signs in well-lit, accessible locations around the kitchen. Provide tactile signage if so required.
- If there are employees with hearing difficulties, provide visual hazard warning systems (for example) automated lights to signal when water is boiling or when the oven is hot.



## > Some dos and don'ts



### Do:

- ✓ Recognise that your remit in terms of health and safety 'duty of care' is to all employees.
- ✓ Carry out risk assessments and develop control measures to minimise identified risk.
- ✓ Review and update your risk assessments and your health and safety plan at regular intervals, making sure to factor in safety planning around disability.
- ✓ Check how the plan is being implemented in practice.
- ✓ Consult with individual staff members on their health and safety requirements.
- ✓ Check with relevant specialist disability organisations on safety requirements, adaptations and supports available for employees with disabilities, where relevant while always keeping the identity of the person confidential.
- ✓ Ensure an inclusive workplace where all employees' needs are respected.
- ✓ Be alert to and protect all staff from bullying and harassment.
- ✓ Avail of supports available such as reasonable accommodation grants,
- ✓ Use Universal Design guidance for work environments.

### Don't:

- ✗ Presume there is no one on your staff who is living with a disability. Many disabilities are not readily apparent and people may not have disclosed for a wide variety of reasons.
- ✗ Talk to an employee's doctor about his or her needs without their worker's consent.
- ✗ Don't assume an employee doesn't have the capacity to undertake aspects of their role or advance in their role.



## > Case studies

The following sample case studies are included to demonstrate how easy and effective it is to implement inclusive health and safety processes that contribute to an optimum work environment. They cover a range of different conditions and set out some practical solutions to the issues presented.

### **Laura, an employee with epilepsy**

Laura has worked in a factory for the past eight years. As a result of a road traffic accident, she recently developed epilepsy and has occasional seizures. She has informed her employer and her colleagues that she has epilepsy, and informed them of the frequency of the seizures, what induces them and how they should be managed. Laura has also explained how she manages her sleeping and eating in order to reduce the likelihood of having seizures.

With assistance from Brainwave (Irish Epilepsy Association) and Laura's GP, a risk assessment was carried out. This assessment highlighted that certain external factors such as lighting, noise levels and breathing problems, as well as stress, can trigger epileptic seizures. Laura's responsible attitude towards her health means that she is aware that factors such as being tired, run-down, anxious or skipping meals could also cause seizures to occur. These are factors that she can control.

### **Control measures**

Laura was given headphones to reduce exposure to factory noise levels and was moved into a well-ventilated office space. Laura has also brought in cushions and blankets to her office. The cushions could be used to provide support for her head should a seizure occur in the workplace.

Brainwave, the Irish Epilepsy Association, advised Laura and her employer that it would be beneficial to give a presentation to her

colleagues about epilepsy. The objective of the presentation was to raise awareness and understanding throughout the company about epilepsy. It also provided Laura's colleagues with information regarding the best ways to assist her if she has a seizure in the workplace.

The company's first aid person also trained the staff on the proper procedures to use when someone has a seizure and the aftercare options that such an individual requires.

### **Robert, an employee with a visual impairment**

Robert has a visual impairment that means he cannot see well close up. He has been newly recruited to the sales team of a leading car rental company and works in a large office to the side of a busy forecourt. He is the senior support manager for the sales team and supervises the distribution of invoicing and account management for the team, in addition to dealing with

clients in person and on the telephone.

#### **Control measures**

The risk assessment and control measures for Robert's job include many aspects that are also relevant to his peers, such as:

- safe access and egress to the office from the forecourt,
- highly visible signs in large format for entrances and exits,
- highlighted walkways through the forecourt, and
- maintenance of fire alarms.

Some minor additional accommodations needed to be implemented to ensure Robert's health and safety in the workplace. The steps to the canteen area were fitted with contrasting coloured nosings. The top and the bottom steps also have separate coloured nosings so that Robert can see where the stairs begin and end. The glass door to the office and the glass walls of the forecourt were fitted with strips so that Robert will not walk into them by mistake. Badly lit areas throughout the building were provided with extra lighting. Bright paint on the walls of these areas and fitted handrails ensure that Robert has no difficulty getting around the workplace.

Robert also requested a screen magnifier that enables him to see printed text and text on the screen of his PC more clearly. It's also important to keep common areas uncluttered in line with good housekeeping practice.

Robert and his employer were able to consult with expert agencies, including the NCBI (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), to make his work environment more accessible to him and to other employees with disabilities. These agencies also provided Robert's employer with information and advice on how to cost-effectively obtain these accommodations. As these are necessary for Robert's work, there are possible Government supports which Robert's employer can avail of.



### Mark, an employee with a mental health issue

Mark is in his late 20s and has been working in a bank for 10 years. He has recently had difficulties in his private life. He met with a representative from the EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) a few times and then with his GP, who diagnosed reactive depression, and he had to take some time off work. Mark knew his supervisor and employer were aware of his situation but he was unsure what his next steps should be. His supervisor was also unsure how he could support and retain this valued employee.

A meeting was arranged between Mark, his supervisor and a representative of the EAP to discuss how Mark could be adequately supported in the workplace. The outcome of this meeting was that Mark would continue his course of treatment (counselling and anti-depressants for three months) and the EAP representative and the supervisor agreed to be his support network.

A risk assessment for Mark's health and safety at work was carried out in conjunction with his support network. This assessment helped Mark and his supervisor to identify those aspects of his work he found difficult and to find effective ways in which they could address them.

Through the risk assessment, Mark identified four difficulties which were:

- dealing with irate customers on the telephone,
- dealing with large groups at the bank counter,
- getting up for work on Mondays to face these pressures, and
- dealing with his low energy levels in the afternoons.

### Control measures

Working together Mark and his support network came up with the following practical solutions/control measures to deal with the above situations.

- Mark has confidential access to the EAP service throughout the working week.
- Work activities that Mark finds calming are timetabled every morning.
- Mark has a limited, designated time each day when he talks to customers on the telephone.
- Mark has access to a designated supportive colleague should a call become difficult.
- Mark engages in counter work only with individuals and for limited periods and defined times – not first thing in the morning nor late in the afternoon.
- Mark has confidential meetings with his employer to monitor and support his progress in the workplace.

While it was not possible to alter Mark's job significantly, the above amendments will be beneficial to both Mark and his employer. With the right supports, Mark is taking responsibility for his attendance and performance at work. He is also being responsible for his own health and safety in the workplace. His employer has learned how to provide effective support for an employee who has developed a mental health condition. In the process, they have also retained a valuable staff member.

Mark's employer and his work colleagues would also benefit from a comprehensive series of disability equality training from a qualified disability equality trainer. There are grants for this purpose under the Disability Awareness Support Scheme. This training should cover the experiences of people with a range of different disabilities (including people with mental health conditions) in mainstream society. It should also focus on best practice procedures for including people with different disabilities in the workplace.

### **Ciara, an employee with cerebral palsy**

Ciara is a wheelchair user, with limited use of her arms. She also has a speech impairment. She communicates using a computerised voice that operates through her computer keyboard and is attached to the side of her powered wheelchair. Ciara is a qualified and experienced information technology worker. She has a personal assistant to support her to live and work independently.

#### **Control measures**

Ciara's employer was anxious to support and facilitate Ciara when she joined the company. The company decided to arrange disability equality training for Ciara's co-workers and opted to arrange this through Ciara's support organisation, Enable Ireland.

Ciara's employer asked her advice on the best way for other staff members to communicate with her. As a result of Ciara's expertise, and the disability equality training, other employees know that they should ask her if she requires assistance in a situation and not just assume that she does.

On her first day at work, Ciara and her personal assistant were introduced to everyone that she would be working with. Like any new employee, Ciara was assigned a buddy in her first two weeks to ensure that she and her personal assistant became familiar with the company. Ciara's supervisor also ensured that she was included in all group/team projects and that she was not isolated.

Ciara advised her employer of the control measures that needed to be implemented to ensure that she can evacuate the building safely. A personal emergency egress plan was prepared and is tested and refined in routine drills. Ciara's employer ensures that Ciara and her department are located in an accessible part of the building, with an accessible fire exit. Evacuation chairs are provided in the upper stories of the building in case Ciara goes upstairs for a meeting.

Door handles, light switches and other controls that Ciara needs to use are placed at appropriate heights. The venue for the usual Friday night drink was changed to an accessible bar where Ciara can join in the fun.

Ciara's employer has now decided to develop a written disability equality policy, and a group of employees from across all departments are working with the human resource manager to develop and implement the policy.

### **Tim, an employee with an intellectual disability**

Tim has an intellectual disability and works as a porter in a busy kitchen. Along with the other porters, he is responsible for cleaning and maintaining the kitchen. Tim often deals with cleaning chemicals, handles food supplies and lifts heavy boxes.

Tim is an exemplary employee but forgets easily and needs to be told on a daily basis that each task has to be completed. For example, when cleaning the ovens, he will need to be reminded to wash the inside and the outside of the ovens. Once Tim is given precise instructions, he is able to complete his tasks effectively.

Giving Tim daily reminders about completing his tasks does not take a lot of time – no more than 10 minutes – and ensures that he does an excellent job. Tim is also provided with a set of step-by-step visual instructions that assist him in remembering his different tasks.

#### **Control measures**

To ensure that Tim is working in an inclusive, healthy and safe environment, his supervisor will spend around 10 minutes a day reminding Tim, using clear and simple language, of the safest way for him to complete individual tasks.

Tim is provided with his own health and safety booklet that he has access to at all times. This booklet is written in plain English to clearly explain health and safety practices to all users, and uses pictures to help understand what they need to do to keep themselves safe, for example how to lift a heavy box without hurting your back.

Tim's supervisor checks frequently during the day that Tim understands the tasks he is to complete and the health and safety procedures around these tasks.

Other employees were given disability equality training that helped them understand Tim's particular needs at work. They understand that they need to give instructions on a step-by-step basis so that Tim can follow them, and that they often need to repeat instructions as Tim can easily forget.

Tim has a 'safety buddy', who has the task of ensuring that Tim leaves the building promptly whenever there is a fire drill. This buddy will also help Tim in any actual emergency.

## Janet, an employee who is hard-of-hearing

Janet is hard-of-hearing and is the shipping manager for a busy educational publications company. She is responsible for ensuring that the shipping department runs efficiently and effectively, that it exceeds its targets, and that customers receive their products such as books, DVDs and CDs on time and in good condition.

Janet's company has been very proactive in employing people with disabilities and has an excellent disability equality programme for its staff. Janet was involved in the development and implementation of this programme.

Janet's supervisors and colleagues know the most effective ways to communicate with her. When speaking to Janet they:

- use a clear, normal tone and do not over-enunciate or exaggerate their words,
- speak directly to Janet, not covering their mouth or turning their face away when talking to her, and
- face into the light.

At company meetings one of Janet's colleagues takes notes for her to ensure that she can follow the conversation. At times more complex adaptations may be needed, such as using CART (need explanation for CART) or real-time captioning, which requires training and expertise and often paid-for services of experts in that field.

These simple and more comprehensive steps mean that Janet really feels part of the team and able for the management of her job role. She is also not isolated from other staff members or excluded from formal or informal conversations at work.

If Janet is in the company's busy loading dock she will sometimes take a pen and paper with her so that she can communicate quickly with her colleagues by writing notes.

### Control measures

Janet's advice and expertise helped her employer to provide the following effective health and safety control measures:

- Janet was given a written health and safety briefing as she walked through the building and shown the fire exits at her induction.
- Janet's office has a flashing alarm, placed where she can easily see it from her desk. Other places in the building also have flashing alarms.

In addition to other established safety precautions, the following additional control measures are in place in the loading dock:

- all staff members are aware that Janet may not hear approaching vehicles or any shouted warnings. Safety and alert routines have been modified accordingly, following consultation with Janet about

her needs, and are practiced regularly.

- flashing warning lights are in place on all vehicles and forklifts, and are regularly tested to ensure they are working properly.
- because Janet works in her office and in the busy loading area, it is important that she is alerted to any health or safety emergency. She carries a vibrating pager linked to the company's alarm system. In addition, two of her colleagues have been assigned responsibility to alert Janet in person and by text message in the event of any emergency.
- there are mirrors at all intersections within the company's loading dock and warehouse so that Janet can see if a vehicle is approaching and the drivers can also see her.

### **Emily, an employee with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, with ADHD and associated conditions**

Emily recently graduated from university and has just been recruited to work as a software engineer for a multinational IT company based in Dublin. She has recently been diagnosed with autism and ADHD. Her employer has been very impressed with the standard of work she produces as a software engineer, although her diagnoses mean that she can have some difficulties.

These are focused on

- problems concentrating on multiple tasks,
- organising her work,
- communicating her support needs, and
- physical difficulty moving around the office safely.

With her combined diagnoses of autism and ADHD, Emily has sensory issues around sounds as well as concentration, focus and sensory-motor needs. She can find the noises around the office distracting, even overwhelming, and she also needs to take regular breaks to ensure she remains able to withstand some of these general office stimuli. Emily also finds 'Stimming' (or self-stimulatory behaviour), which is a series of repetitive movements she needs to do whenever she's nervous or excited, an excellent method to manage her concentration levels and keep herself on task as she works on different projects.

She also wishes to have access to have a quiet space where she can work without distractions and a workspace which can be easily approached and where she can diligently do her work with little interruption or few distractions.

#### **Control measures**

Emily's employer was keen to support her during her on-boarding process. The company arranged disability equality training for her colleagues and managers concerning disability generally with a focus on autism and ADHD.

Emily's employer asked for her advice on how staff members can communicate with her, and what working style best fits her needs.

Using Emily's lived experience advice, and the disability equality training, colleagues were able to communicate with her using her preferred communication mode, and she was given the time and the space she needs to work healthily and effectively.

The company also asked her about what working hours helped her to produce her best work, what times she wanted to take breaks and what tools would help her produce her best work.

She was given flexible working hours, particularly around her start and finish times, and her manager organised these adjustments into a daily schedule to help her organise her work.

To build her confidence and to help with starting a new work routine, she was assigned a workplace mentor for the first few weeks of her job, and this helped her get to know her colleagues, introduce her to her new working environment and to get her up to speed with her job tasks.

Her line manager made sure that she was included in all group projects and team outings whenever she felt comfortable and allowed her to take breaks during work meetings.

She was also allowed to work from home for two days per week which helped her to recover from the physical and sensory impact of her commute to the office and working at the office during the week, where she can use instant messaging and video calling platforms to stay in touch with her colleagues.

Emily advised her employer about what control measures are needed to ensure that she can work safely, due to the sensory impact of her disability, particularly at points during the working day when she needs to move around the office and go to different buildings. To ensure that she works in a safe and inclusive manner, the company assigned her a more open workspace in a quieter part of the office where she can freely move around.

They also provide her with access to a quiet space for whenever she needs to stim as well as noise-cancelling headphones to help her work without too many distractions by blocking out some of the background noise around the office. Emily's line manager checks in frequently with her to make sure she knows what to do and there are visual prompts and physical reminders around her workspace to remind her of what she needs to do next should she forget.

The employer prepared a personal emergency egress plan, which was tested and refined during routine drills. Her employer reinforces this by locating Emily and her department in an accessible building with a fire exit she can easily access in case of emergency. They also make sure that lifts around the office are checked regularly, are in working order and comply with health and safety standards, and that evacuation chairs are provided in upper stories to ensure that staff with physical impairment or limitations can quickly leave the building when an emergency happens.

The company also makes sure that door handles, light switches, desks, and computer monitors are all placed at appropriate heights so that those with physical impairments can easily use them. As part of their wider diversity and inclusion strategies, Emily's employer also developed a written disability equality policy, so that all employees with and without disabilities are treated equitably by the company. This is being developed and implemented by a group of employees which span across all departments, as well as the office's human resource manager, guided by a working group comprising some employees with disabilities across a range of impairments.



> Further  
information

### For further information contact:

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#### Health and Safety Authority

Workplace Contact Unit  
Metropolitan Building  
James Joyce Street Dublin 1

LoCall: 1890 289 389

Email: [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie)

Website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)

### Advice may also be sought from:

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#### Aware

9 Leeson Street Upper  
Dublin 4

Office: 01 6617211

Direct: 087 94 080 28

Support Line: 1800 80 48 48

[www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

Aware is the national organisation providing support, education and information services for those impacted by depression, bipolar disorder and other mood related conditions. Aware provides clear information, understanding and support, both for individuals with a diagnosis of depression or bipolar disorder as well as family members supporting a loved one.

#### Epilepsy Ireland

249 Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12  
D12RW92, Ireland

01 455 7500

[www.epilepsy.ie](http://www.epilepsy.ie)

Epilepsy Ireland provide a [range of services](#) across the Country from headquarters in Dublin and via our regional offices. Epilepsy Ireland's vision is to achieve a society where no person's life is limited by epilepsy. For the majority of people with epilepsy, the condition is unlikely to impinge on their working lives. Epilepsy Ireland provides a range of information on the condition.

### **Central Remedial Clinic**

Central Remedial Clinic  
Vernon Avenue,  
Clontarf,  
Dublin 3.  
CRC Clontarf

353 1 854 2200

[www.crc.ie](http://www.crc.ie)

The CRC provide a range of services, the Assistive Technology and Specialised Seating service takes referrals from across Ireland.

### **Citizens Information Board**

Citizens Information Board  
George's Quay House  
43 Townsend Street  
Dublin 2  
D02 VK65

[www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/#](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/#)

The Citizens Information Board is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services, and for the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service.

### **Chime**

35 North Frederick Street  
Dublin 1

Skype: Chime NFS,

Text: 087 922 1046

[www.chime.ie](http://www.chime.ie)

To limit the impact of deafness and hearing loss through promoting accessibility, creating supportive communities, and enabling personal choice and community participation.

### **AsIAm,**

(Autism Spectrum Information Advice & Meeting Point),  
Rock House  
Main Street, Blackrock  
Co. Dublin  
A94 V9P1

(01) 445 3203

[www.aslam.ie](http://www.aslam.ie)

AsIAm is Ireland's national autism charity and advocacy organisation. Aslam runs a range of programmes equipping businesses, organisations, schools, universities and communities to support autistic people across the life course. We also accredit businesses and train practitioners on best practices in accessibility and inclusion.

### **Inclusion Ireland**

Unit C2  
The Steelworks  
Foley Street  
Dublin 1

01 855 9891

[www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie)

Inclusion Ireland provides a central forum for its members. Inclusion Ireland campaigns for changes in services and legislation that will improve the quality of life and participation of people with an intellectual disability in Irish society.



**Independent Living Movement Ireland**

Carmichael House  
North Brunswick Street  
Dublin 7

01 8730455

[www.ilmli.ie](http://www.ilmli.ie)

Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) was the first Irish Centre for Independent Living in 1992 by and for disabled people. ILMI's main aim that disabled people achieved Independent Living, choice and control over their lives and full participation in society as equal citizens.

**Irish Deaf Society**

Deaf Village Ireland  
Ratoath Road  
Cabra  
Dublin 7

Text: +353 (86) 380 7033

[www.irishdeafociety.ie](http://www.irishdeafociety.ie)

Skype: irishdeafsociety

Telephone: +353 (01) 860 1878

The Irish Deaf Society seeks to achieve and promote the equality and rights of deaf people in Ireland. The society ensures that deaf people in Ireland are enabled to celebrate their culture and continue to ensure the upholding of Irish Sign Language recognition and break down the barriers of discrimination.

**Disability Federation of Ireland**

Fumbally Court  
Fumbally Lane  
Dublin 8  
D08 TXY8

01 454 7978

[www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)

Disability Federation of Ireland advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities and disabling conditions in all aspects of their lives.

**Enable Ireland**

32F Rosemount Park Drive  
Rosemount Business Park  
Ballycoolin Road  
Dublin 11

01 872 7155

[www.enableireland.ie](http://www.enableireland.ie)

Enable Ireland provides free services to more than 9,200 children and adults with disabilities and their families from 43 locations in 15 counties. Covering childhood to adulthood, our expert teams work with the individual and their family on a plan for each life stage.

**SOLAS**

Block 1  
Castleforbes House  
Castleforbes Road  
Dublin 1  
Do1 A8No

[www.solas.ie](http://www.solas.ie)

SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, has a remit to plan, fund and support the Further Education and Training sector in the delivery of further education and skills training, delivered through sixteen regional Education and Training Boards.

### **Irish Wheelchair Association**

Áras Chúchulainn  
Blackheath Drive  
Clontarf  
Dublin 3

01 818 6400

[info@iwa.ie](mailto:info@iwa.ie)

Irish wheelchair Association is a leading representative organisation for people with physical disabilities and have a membership of approximately 20,000 people. Services we provide nationwide include Assisted Living Services, Transport, Driving School.

### **Mental Health Ireland**

Second Floor,  
Marina House,  
11-13 Clarence Street,  
Dun Laoghaire,  
Co. Dublin  
A96 E289

01 2841166

[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

Mental Health Ireland promotes positive mental health and wellbeing for all individuals and communities to support people with lived experience of mental health challenges in their recovery, bringing practical expression to national policy objectives.

### **National Disability Authority (NDA)**

25 Clyde Road  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
D04 E409

01 6080400

[nda@nda.ie](mailto:nda@nda.ie)

The National Disability Authority (NDA) is the independent statutory body that provides information and advice to the Government on policy and practice relevant to the lives of persons with disabilities. It also hosts the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design that has a range of best practice guidance covering the built environment, products and services as well as technologies such as accessible websites.

[www.universaldesign.ie](http://www.universaldesign.ie)

### **National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)**

Whitworth Road  
Drumcondra  
Dublin 9

01-8307033

087 9955076

NCBI InfoLine: 1850 33 43 53  
(Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

[www.ncbi.ie](http://www.ncbi.ie)

NCBI, national sight loss agency. In the area of employment support, NCBI supports job seekers through pre-employment supports and internships as well as working with employers to advise them on the supports available to them when hiring an employee with sight loss and undertaking disability assessments to make the workplace as accessible as possible.

**Shine**

Block B  
Maynooth Business Campus  
Co Kildare  
W23W5X7

Phone: (01) 541 3715

[www.shine.ie](http://www.shine.ie)

Shine is the national organisation providing information and support for people affected by mental health difficulties. We support individuals and family members.





## > Resources

**(use online version of this guide to access website links)**

- [Assisting people with autism in employment- guidance for line managers](#)
- Built environment Design Guidance: [Building for Everyone – a Universal Design Approach](#)  
- A resource with information on human abilities and characteristics, related disabilities and design considerations
- Communication design guidance: [Communications toolkit](#) and [Design for all Approach](#)
- [Disability Awareness Support Scheme](#) available to private sector employers
- [Employers for change](#) - The aim of Employers for Change is to provide an employer disability information service. The service will empower employers with all the information and advice needed to hire, employ, manage and retain staff with disabilities.

- [Reasonable Accommodation Fund](#): financial assistance for employers and employees with a disability to take appropriate measures to help a person with a disability to access, improve or retain their employment by providing the following grants:
  - the [Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant](#) (WEAG)
  - the [Job Interview Interpreter Grant](#) (JIIG)
  - the [Personal Reader Grant](#) (PRG)
  - the [Employee Retention Grant](#) (ERG)
- Mental Health Ireland: [Supporting Recovery](#) and series of [Podcasts](#)
- [NCBI Employers Guide](#) & [NCBI Jobseekers Guide](#)
- [NDA](#) report on reasonable accommodation
- [ISO/IEC Guide 71:2014](#) Guide for Addressing Accessibility in Standards
- [I.S. EN 17161:2019](#) 'Accessibility following a Design for All approach in products, goods and services - Extending the range of users'

**Notes:**

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### Further Information and Guidance:

Visit our website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie), telephone our contact centre on **1890 289 389** or email [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie)

Use BeSMART, our free online risk assessment tool at [www.besmart.ie](http://www.besmart.ie)

Check out our range of free online courses at [www.hsalearning.ie](http://www.hsalearning.ie)



*Our Vision:  
Healthy, safe and  
productive lives  
and enterprises*

**Health and Safety  
Authority**

**Tel. 1890 289 389**

International  
Callers

00353 1 6147000

[www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)

