



Institute of
Medical
Illustrators



Disability Support Guide

Version History

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Contents

Introduction	4
Understanding workplace adjustments for staff with disabilities	4
Defining disability	4
Additional information for managers	5
Requesting adjustments: Information for Employers	6
Requesting adjustments: Information for Employees	6
Practical steps for staff	6
Section 1: Internal Support	7
Internal Support Services: UK and Ireland	8
Section 2: External Support	9
External Support Services: UK and Ireland	10
Organisation Links	11

Introduction

Creating an inclusive working environment is fundamental to the values of the NHS and the Medical Illustrators pathway. Staff with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or neurodivergent profiles bring vital skills and perspectives to healthcare, and it is essential that their workplaces remove barriers to ensure they can thrive.

This guide has been developed to support clinical photographers, medical illustrators, apprentices, and trainees in accessing workplace adjustments, professional development opportunities, and specialist support. Whether navigating physical, sensory, mental health, or learning-related challenges, the support structures outlined here aim to promote equal participation, well-being, and excellence at work.

Understanding workplace adjustments for staff with disabilities

Creating an inclusive working environment is fundamental to the values of the NHS and the Medical Illustrators pathway. Staff with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia or ADHD may require additional support to carry out their roles effectively. Providing this support is known as making reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Reasonable adjustments are practical measures that remove barriers and enable staff to perform the essential duties of their job on an equal footing with colleagues. These supports are tailored to the individual and may vary depending on the nature of the role, service needs, and the staff member's specific requirements.

Defining disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This definition includes a wide range of conditions, such as:

- Physical disabilities
- Sensory impairments
- Mental health conditions
- Neurodivergent profiles (e.g., autism, ADHD)
- Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)
- Long-term medical conditions

A disability may be visible or non-visible, temporary or long-term, stable or fluctuating. Not everyone with a diagnosed condition identifies with the term "disabled", but they may still be entitled to workplace support.

What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are changes that help remove barriers that may disadvantage a disabled staff member in the workplace. These adjustments enable employees to carry out the essential functions of their role safely and effectively.

Examples include:

Adapting the physical environment

e.g., providing a quieter workspace, modifying lighting, or ensuring accessible facilities.

Providing equipment or assistive technology

e.g., speech-to-text software, mind-mapping tools, ergonomic equipment, screen overlays.

Adjusting work tasks or workload

e.g., reallocating certain administrative tasks, allowing additional time for documentation, structuring duties to reduce cognitive load.

Flexible working arrangements

e.g., adjusted hours, hybrid working, planned rest breaks.

Accessible communication

e.g., written instructions, plain-English documents, alternative formats.

Training, coaching, or specialist support

e.g., neurodiversity-aware coaching, Access to Work support, mentoring.

Employers are not required to remove the essential duties of a role or create a new job, but they are required to consider and implement reasonable, effective, and practical measures that support the staff member.

Additional information for managers

This guide has been developed primarily to direct individual employees to appropriate sources of advice and support, both locally and nationally. Additionally, it serves as a resource for managers and supervisors to assist staff who may be experiencing difficulties in the workplace.

Before initiating any performance or capability process, managers should seek HR advice if there is any indication that a disability or SpLD may be contributing to difficulties at work.

Some staff may have undiagnosed learning difficulties that only become apparent in certain tasks or environments. HR can support managers in exploring whether an underlying condition may be affecting performance and advise on appropriate next steps, such as reasonable adjustments, support strategies, or referral for further assessment.

Requesting adjustments: Information for Employers

When a staff member requests support, managers should arrange a timely, confidential meeting to discuss their needs. This conversation should be approached with sensitivity and a focus on problem-solving.

Managers should consider:

- The essential duties of the role
- Where barriers may exist
- Whether further assessment is needed (e.g., OH referral)
- What adjustments are practical and effective
- Whether support from HR, IT, Estates, or Learning & Development is required
- Whether Access to Work funding may help provide equipment or coaching

Managers should keep staff updated on progress, document agreed adjustments, and review them regularly. If a request cannot be approved, the manager must clearly explain the reasons, taking into account legal obligations under the Equality Act.

Creating an inclusive workplace is a shared responsibility. By working collaboratively and proactively, NHS teams can ensure that staff with disabilities or SpLDs are supported to thrive within their clinical roles. Taking this approach ensures fair and supportive management, in line with legal and organisational responsibilities under equality and disability legislation.

Requesting adjustments: Information for Employees

If you have a disability, long-term condition, or SpLD and believe you would benefit from additional support, you should speak with your line manager, Occupational Health (OH), or HR. You may find it helpful to share:

- How your condition affects your work
- Specific tasks or environments that present challenges
- Any previous adjustments that have helped
- Reports or assessments (e.g., SpLD diagnostic reports, OH recommendations)

You can request a referral to OH for a workplace assessment. Consultations are confidential and you can choose what information is shared with your manager.

Once adjustments are agreed, you and your manager should review them regularly. Many NHS Trusts use a Workplace Adjustments Passport to document support and ensure continuity if you change roles or managers.

Practical steps for staff

- Apply for Access to Work (AtW), either independently or with help from your employer.
- Engage with neurodiversity-aware coaches or mentors (many are available through NHS networks or AtW).

Section 1: Internal Support

Each NHS Trust provides support for staff with neurodiversities, often through the following routes:

1.1 Occupational Health (OH)

- Can initiate or support referrals to Access to Work
- Offer internal assessments for reasonable adjustments
- Advise managers on implementing support strategies

1.2 Workplace Adjustments and Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, NHS employers are required to make “reasonable adjustments” for staff with disabilities, including Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs). This may include:

- Adjusted deadlines or flexible task allocation
- Modified workspaces
- Allowing the use of supportive software
- Extra time for written documentation or report-writing tasks

1.3 Learning and Development Teams

May provide access to:

- Training and development to develop skills in specific areas e.g. time management English, Maths etc
- Digital tools to help work place activities
- Some Trusts have a Disability Champion or Neurodiversity Lead who can guide staff through the support process

1.4 Staff Networks

- Disabled Staff Networks or Neurodivergent Staff Forums exist in many organisations
- These offer peer support, advocacy, and a safe space to raise concerns

Internal Support Services: UK and Ireland

Support Area	NHS England & Wales	NHS Scotland	Health & Social Care Northern Ireland	Health Service Executive Ireland
Occupational Health	Workplace assessments, reasonable adjustment recommendations, supports Access to Work applications.	Workplace assessments, adjustments, and return-to-work planning.	Workplace assessments, adjustments, and return-to-work planning.	Workplace assessments, modified duties, return-to-work support.
HR / People Services	HR/People Services advise on reasonable adjustments, policies, and performance processes.	HR teams within each Health Board support adjustments and policy implementation.	HR teams within each Trust support reasonable adjustments and policy implementation.	National HR Helpdesk for advice on policies and reasonable accommodation.
Assistive Technology / ICT	IT Services support assistive tech, digital tools, and accessibility solutions.	eHealth/IT departments support digital accessibility and assistive technology.	Digital Services support digital assistive technology and accessibility tools.	ICT supports assistive software, devices, and digital accessibility.
Estates / Facilities	Estates teams support environmental adjustments and workspace changes.	Estates teams within Health Boards support building adaptations and accessibility.	Estates teams support environmental adjustments and accessibility modifications.	Capital & Estates support physical accessibility modifications.
Recruitment Support	Trust-level recruitment teams manage adjustments during interviews and onboarding.	Recruitment handled by individual Health Boards; adjustments supported locally.	Recruitment handled by Trusts; adjustments supported locally during interviews and onboarding.	National Recruitment Service (NRS) manages recruitment and accommodations.
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Teams	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion teams support inclusive practice and reasonable adjustments.	Equality & Diversity Leads within Health Boards support inclusive practice.	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion teams within Trusts support inclusive practice and adjustments.	Diversity, Equality and Inclusion teams provides guidance and training.
Staff Networks	Disabled Staff Networks, Neurodiversity Networks (Trust-level).	Staff networks vary by Health Board; many have Disability & Carer Networks.	Staff networks vary by Trust; some have Disability, Carer or Inclusion Networks.	Le Chéile Network (national).
Workplace Adjustment	Workplace Adjustments Passport (portable across roles/managers).	Workplace Adjustments Passport (nationally promoted).	Workplace Adjustments Passport or OH-issued adjustment plans.	Work Accommodation Form (via OH).

Section 2: External Support

2.1 Access to Work (AtW)

- AtW is a UK government scheme designed to support individuals to get help or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability (<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>).

Who is eligible?

Any NHS staff member (including clinical photographers, medical illustrators, trainees, and apprentices) who:

- Has a disability or health condition that impacts their ability to work
- Is employed or about to start work
- Is 16 or older and lives in England, Scotland or Wales

How Access to Work can help with SpLDs:

For individuals with conditions like dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia or ADHD, support can include:

- Assistive technology, such as:
- Speech-to-text or text-to-speech software
- Mind-mapping tools (e.g., Inspiration, MindView)
- Grammar/spelling tools (e.g., Grammarly, ClaroRead)
- Workplace coaching:
- Strategies for organisation, time management, memory
- ADHD-specific executive function coaching
- Awareness training for line managers and teams to promote inclusive practices
- Specialist equipment, such as coloured overlays, ergonomic tools, or voice recorders
- Travel support, if a condition impacts the ability to travel safely and independently

How to apply:

- Visit the official Access to Work webpage (<https://www.get-disability-work-support.service.gov.uk/apply/eligibility/check-eligible>)
- Complete an online or telephone application
- An assessment may be arranged with a specialist who will explore your needs in your specific work environment
- A report will be shared with recommended support
- Your employer may be required to fund part of the costs depending on the organisation's size and how long you've been employed

External Support Services: UK and Ireland

Support Area	NHS England & Wales	NHS Scotland	Health & Social Care Northern Ireland	Health Service Executive Ireland
ADHD Support	ADHD UK, ADHD Foundation	ADHD Foundation Scotland, NHS Scotland ADHD services	ADD-NI (ADHD Support Northern Ireland), local HSC ADHD services	ADHD Ireland
Autism Support	National Autistic Society	Scottish Autism	Autism NI	AsIAm
Dyslexia Support	British Dyslexia Association	British Dyslexia Association	British Dyslexia Association	Dyslexia Ireland
Dyspraxia / DCD Support	Dyspraxia Foundation UK	Dyspraxia Scotland (via support groups & charities).	Dyspraxia Support (NI)	Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland
Brain Injury Support	Headway UK	Headway Scotland	Brain Injury Matters NI	Acquired Brain Injury Ireland
Deaf / Hard of Hearing Support	RNID	Deaf Action Scotland	British Deaf Association NI, RNID NI	Chime
Blind / Vision Impairment Support	RNIB	RNIB Scotland, Sight Scotland	RNIB NI, Angel Eyes NI	Vision Ireland
Epilepsy Support	Epilepsy Action	Epilepsy Scotland	Epilepsy Action NI	Epilepsy Ireland
Mental Health Support	Mind, Rethink Mental Illness	SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health)	Inspire Wellbeing NI, MindWise NI	Aware
Physical Disability Support	Scope, Leonard Cheshire	Capability Scotland	Disability Action NI	Irish Wheelchair Association
Multiple Sclerosis Support	MS Society UK	MS Society Scotland	MS Society NI	MS Ireland
Literacy / Learning Support	National Literacy Trust	Scottish Book Trust, Adult Learning Services	Literacy NI, Libraries NI learning programmes	NALA
Disability Policy & Rights	Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC)	EHRC Scotland + Inclusion Scotland	Equality Commission for NI (ECNI)	National Disability Authority (NDA)
Employment Rights & Advice	ACAS	ACAS + EmployAbility Scotland	Labour Relations Agency NI, Advice NI	Citizens Information Board
Government Workplace Support Scheme	Access to Work (UK-wide)	Access to Work (UK-wide)	Access to Work (UK-wide)	No direct equivalent; employer-funded.

Organisation Links

AHEAD – Inclusive education and employment supports. <https://ahead.ie>

ADHD Foundation – ADHD support and resources. <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk>

ADHD Ireland – Support services and resources. <https://adhdireland.ie>

AsIAm – Autism support and advocacy. <https://asiam.ie>

Aware – Mental health support services. <https://www.aware.ie>

Capability Scotland – Support for people with physical disabilities. <https://www.capability.scot>

Chime – Services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people. <https://www.chime.ie>

Citizens Information Board – Information and advocacy services. <https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie>

Deaf Action – Support for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Scotland. <https://www.deafaction.org>

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – Access to Work: support for people with a disability or health condition. <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Dyslexia Ireland – Information and workplace support for dyslexia. <https://www.dyslexia.ie>

Dyslexia Scotland – Support for people with dyslexia in Scotland. <https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk>

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland – Support services for dyspraxia/DCD. <https://www.dyspraxia.ie>

Dyspraxia Foundation UK – Support and information for people with dyspraxia/DCD. <https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>

Enable Ireland – Disability services and supports. <https://www.enableireland.ie>

Epilepsy Action – Epilepsy information and support. <https://www.epilepsy.org.uk>

Epilepsy Ireland – Information and support services. <https://www.epilepsy.ie>

Epilepsy Scotland – Support for people with epilepsy. <https://www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk>

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – Equality and disability rights guidance. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

EHRC Scotland – Equality and human rights information and resources for Scotland. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/commission-scotland>

Employability Scotland – Employment support for disabled people. <https://www.employabilityinscotland.com>

Headway UK – Brain injury support services. <https://www.headway.org.uk>

Health Service Executive (HSE) – Understanding Workplace Supports for Staff Members with a Disability: A Guideline on Reasonable Accommodation, Version 2 (2025). <https://www.hse.ie>

Inclusion Scotland – Disability rights and advocacy. <https://inclusionscotland.org>

Irish Deaf Society – Advocacy and support for Deaf communities. <https://www.irishdeafsociety.ie>

Irish Wheelchair Association – Services and support for people with physical disabilities. <https://www.iwa.ie>

Mind – Mental health information and support services. <https://www.mind.org.uk>

MS Ireland – Support for people living with multiple sclerosis. <https://www.ms-society.ie>

MS Society Scotland – Support for people living with multiple sclerosis in Scotland. <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/scotland>

NALA – National Adult Literacy Agency – Adult literacy and numeracy support. <https://www.nala.ie>

National Autistic Society – Autism information, support and services. <https://www.autism.org.uk>

National Disability Authority – Disability policy, information and guidance. <https://nda.ie>

NHS Employers – Guidance on supporting disabled staff in the workplace. <https://www.nhsemployers.org>

NHS England – Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) technical guidance. <https://www.england.nhs.uk>

NHS – Information on work and disability. <https://www.nhs.uk>

Rethink Mental Illness – Mental health information and support services. <https://www.rethink.org>

RNIB – Royal National Institute of Blind People – Sight loss information and support services. <https://www.rnib.org.uk>

RNIB Scotland – Sight loss support and services in Scotland. <https://www.rnib.org.uk/scotland>

RNID – Royal National Institute for Deaf People – Information and support relating to deafness and hearing loss. <https://www.rnid.org.uk>

SAMH – Scottish Action for Mental Health – Mental health information and support services. <https://www.samh.org.uk>

Scope – Disability equality information, advice and support. <https://www.scope.org.uk>

Scottish Autism – Autism information, support and services. <https://www.scottishautism.org>

Sight Scotland – Support and services for people with sight loss in Scotland. <https://www.sightscotland.org.uk>

Vision Ireland – Information and support for people with sight loss. <https://www.vi.ie>

