



# Autism and ASCs in the Workplace

Autistic people and people with autism spectrum conditions (ASCs) face barriers to employment which can prevent them from reaching their full potential. Not all autistic people or people with ASCs are able to work, but many are, and their skills, talents and interests can bring very real benefits to businesses and employers. Autistic people and people with ASCs can make an enormous contribution to our economy and society, and an increasing number of employers recognise this and are taking active steps to broaden the diversity of their workforce.

Some employers are keen to recruit more autistic people and people with ASCs, but are unsure how to seek advice or offer support in the workplace. This short guide offers some hints and tips, and tells you where to find more information. The most important thing to remember is talk to people – ask applicants what will help them excel in a selection process, and ask employees what will help them flourish in the workplace.



## Recruitment

Job adverts can be difficult for autistic people and those with ASCs. Phrases like ‘team player’ or ‘excellent communication skills’ can be interpreted literally and may make people think they are not suitable for the role. If a skill isn’t strictly necessary for performing the role well, think about whether it should be included in the advert at all. Also, write your job adverts in plain English and avoid complexity.

Be as clear as possible about what a selection process or interview will involve, so that people know what to expect. Where possible, adjust the setting to meet an applicant’s needs – some people may prefer a darker room, some may prefer a telephone interview, others may not. Be as flexible as you can.



## Managers

Helping autistic and ASC employees to reach their potential in the workplace often requires making small adjustments to environments or processes. Everyone has different needs but autistic and ASC employees may benefit from changes to:

- Communication styles – e.g., written vs. verbal instructions
- Sensory inputs – e.g., noise and lighting
- Assistive technology – e.g., speech-to-text software or noise-cancelling headphones

It is important to communicate clearly, and make sure instructions are exact and concise. Be direct and avoid figures of speech, as non-literal language can be confusing.

Make sure that any training you provide is well structured and comprehensive. Provide routines, and don't change them unnecessarily – if changes are required, make sure you tell your employees ahead of time.

Shorter, regular, performance reviews are usually more productive than longer annual reviews. Give direct, clear and honest feedback and expect a direct and honest reply.



## Colleagues

Autistic people and people with ASCs process and interpret information differently. Things that may seem detached or aloof, like a blunt response or avoiding eye contact, should not be taken as personal slights. Some people just have different ways of communicating, and they don't mean any offence. Try to be direct with your communication. Autistic people and those with ASCs can find it hard to read subtleties in body language, understand tone of voice, or read between the lines.

Respect your colleagues' routines and rituals. Whilst they may not make sense to you, they will be essential to your colleague.

Include everyone in activities that you may plan for outside of work, to make sure they feel accepted and welcomed. Some people may not always take part but that doesn't mean you shouldn't invite them.



## Further information and support

There are many online guides to help you support autistic people and people with ASCs in the workplace, including:

- The National Autistic Society advice for employers
- Beyond Autism employability toolkit
- Autism BC 10 ways to better support autistic employees

There are also local organisations who are happy to provide support, advice and guidance, including:

- The Isle of Man Government Disability Employment Service can assist employers by providing guidance, assistance and equipment
- The Public Health department's Workplace Wellbeing Group provides a forum for organisations to share best practice and advice
- The Chamber of Commerce holds a Positive Health and Wellbeing

Forum to encourage networking and collaboration between organisations interested in fostering employee wellbeing

- Autism in Mann – [autisminmann@manx.net](mailto:autisminmann@manx.net) or call **07624 480167**
- Autism Initiatives – [paul.ormond-smith@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:paul.ormond-smith@autisminitiatives.org) or call **01624 814801**

- Crossroads Isle of Man – [info@crossroadsiom.org](mailto:info@crossroadsiom.org) or call **01624 673103**
- Manx Mencap – support for people with learning disabilities – [mencap@manx.net](mailto:mencap@manx.net) or call **01624 677289**