

HOW TO.....CREATE AN AUTISM-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.

Despite (or rather because) of this, individuals with this condition can add real value to the work place.

It is estimated that about 1.1% of the UK population are on the autistic spectrum. However, just 16% of autistic adults are in full time employment in the UK workplace (National Autistic Society).

Autism is covered by the Equality Act (2010). This means it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual with this condition. It is also unlawful to discriminate against a carer of someone with autism

Creating an autistic-friendly workplace:

- Avoid using jargon, phrases and abstract language
- Encourage openness so that people who have autism feel safe to disclose this
- Add autism to your equal opportunities monitoring to help you understand how many people in your population have this condition
- Appoint colleagues to act as mentors to employees with autism
- Engage with external organisations for support
- Arrange autism awareness training for your managers
- Complete a workplace assessment to see how autism friendly your organisation is
- Provide clear rules and routine
- Avoid unnecessary changes without talking these through first
- Make reasonable adjustments*

*Reasonable adjustments could include:

- Flexible working – short days or the opportunity to work from home can help if autism leaves an individual feeling tired
- Excuse employees from informal meetings if this type of setting overwhelms them
- Provide written guidelines, instructions and/or requests rather than verbal ones
- Provide regular, and maybe more frequent, breaks and a quiet space in which to take these

Further information:

[The National Autistic Society](http://www.mind.org.uk)

mind.org.uk

[TUC: Autism in the workplace](#)

[ACAS: Neurodiversity](#)

'Explaining Autism Spectrum Disorder' by Clare Lawrence (2010)

I hope you found this guide useful. Contact me at karen@KDHRSolutions.com if you would like more information.

Recognising Autism

Autism is not easy to recognise.

It is not a physical condition, and often people will have learnt some excellent coping strategies which mean others are not able to recognise, and therefore adapt their own behavior to get the most out of an individual with the condition.

Because of this, there is also an increased risk of the workplace not being autistic-friendly. This increases the risk of unfair treatment, which is both morally and legally wrong.