



UK accessibility guide for inclusive organisations

The Global
Inclusion Company



Around one in four adults in the UK have a disability, and up to 80% of disabilities are invisible ([Gov UK](#)).

Creating accessible workplaces is imperative to cultivating inclusive and equitable environments where all employees can thrive. This guide offers practical ways to promote accessibility, equity and inclusion within the workplace – digitally, physically and culturally.

What is accessibility?

‘Accessibility at work is about removing barriers to make sure disabled people can take an active part in working life. Employers should make sure their workplace, and the way they work, is accessible to as many people as possible. This is on top of the legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and job applicants.’ ([Acas](#))



When workplaces are not accessible, it perpetuates systemic exclusion for disabled people. This exclusion can lead to:

What the Equality Act 2010 says

- **Employment gaps** – Disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed, compared to non-disabled people ([The Health Foundation](#))
- **Pay gaps** – The disability pay gap in the UK is 17.2% ([TUC](#))
- **A loss of valuable skills** – Excluding disabled people can cause organisations to miss out on valuable skills, diverse perspectives and innovation.

“Employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs” ([Gov UK](#))

It is important to remember that not all disabilities are visible. By focusing on accessibility, companies can support people more widely, including visitors, customers and future employees, as well as foster inclusive behaviours and actions within the organisation.

5 types of accessibility barriers that people might face in the workplace

Physical

Buildings, bathrooms, transport, parking, seating

Digital

Websites, apps, content and documents, hardware and devices

Communication

Sign language, Braille, large print, visual guides, plain language, audio (or lack of)

Sensory

Quiet and low-sensory spaces, vibrating alerts, visual alerts

Cultural

Multilingual options, cultural sensitivity, clear language, flexible communication styles

Visual disabilities and accessibility

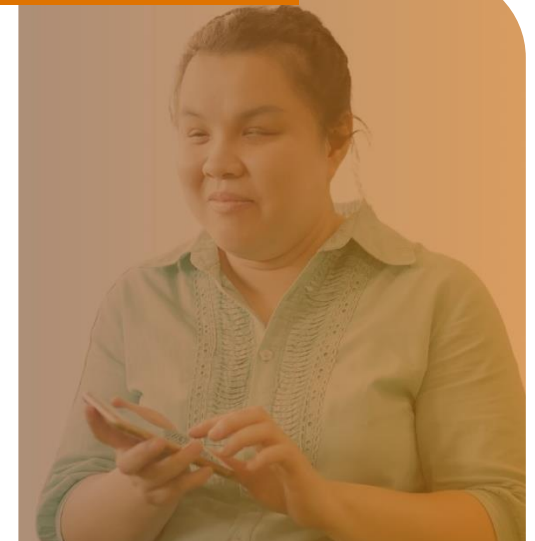
Visual disabilities include total and partial blindness, and low vision. People with visual disabilities may have difficulty seeing objects or judging distances.

Barriers in the workplace

Factors that exclude employees with visual disabilities in the workplace include:

- **Website inaccessibility** – Websites, fonts and digital platforms that are not compatible with screen readers, or do not provide alternative text for images, can block information
- **Inaccessible document formatting** – Documents without clearly defined headings, or appropriate contrast and font styling can be difficult to read
- **Physical navigation challenges** – Workplaces with physical barriers, such as stairs or narrow doorways, or without Braille or high-contrast signage, can be difficult to navigate
- **Meeting participation** – Presentations or meetings that rely on visual content without verbal descriptions can exclude employees with visual disabilities

Did you know?



In the UK, more than two million people are living with sight loss ([NHS](#)).

Those with difficulty seeing are less likely to be employed, compared to other groups ([RNIB](#)).

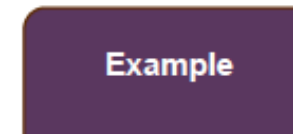
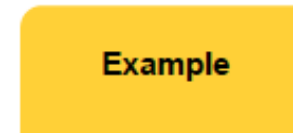
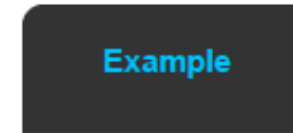
Visual accessibility best practices

To be inclusive of employees with visual disabilities, organisations should:

- Use alternative ('alt') text for images in digital media
- Provide documents in multiple formats, such as large print or audio
- Use high-contrast colours between text and background, with a colour contrast ratio of 4.5:1 or higher
- Avoid relying just on colour to convey meaning - use text description, too
- Keep italic text to a minimum, especially when used to emphasise information. It can be difficult to read for people with low vision, and screen readers do not announce italics, meaning information can be missed
- Install Braille or high-contrast signage throughout the workplace
- Ensure visual information is verbally explained during meetings
- Offer guided tours of the workspace to help familiarise employees with the layout

Examples of colour contrasting

Correct
(high contrast)



Incorrect
(low contrast)



Helpful resources for visual accessibility

- [Colour contrast checker](#) – A tool to test accessible colour contrasting
- [Recite Me](#) – An online accessibility toolbar that offers screen reading, styling, translation and reading support
- [WAVE browser extension](#) – Allows users to evaluate web content for accessibility issues directly within your [browser](#)

Hearing disabilities and accessibility

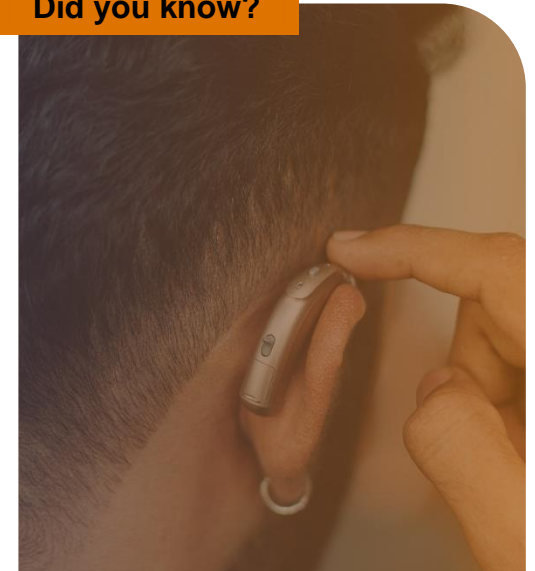
Hearing disabilities can include mild hearing loss, total deafness and tinnitus (hearing noises that do not come from an outside source). Individuals may use hearing aids, sign language (such as British Sign Language or BSL) or lip reading as their main source of communication.

Barriers in the workplace

Factors that exclude employees with hearing disabilities in the workplace include:

- **Noisy environments** – Loud open-plan offices or workplaces without assistive listening systems (such as a hearing loop) can make communication more challenging
- **Lack of inclusive communication** – A lack of BSL interpreters (when needed), subtitles on presentations and real-time captioning during meetings and events can be exclusionary
- **Virtual meeting challenges** – Virtual meetings can have low lighting or a poor internet connection (which can cause an unclear video or audio-video desynchronisation), making lip reading difficult

Did you know?



One in three (18 million) adults in the UK have hearing loss, are deaf, or have tinnitus ([RNID](#)).

12,000 adults in the UK experience work-related hearing problems ([HSE](#)).

Hearing accessibility best practices

To be inclusive of employees with hearing disabilities, organisations should:

- Fit (and regularly test) hearing loops into meeting rooms, common rooms and reception areas to support hearing aid users
- Employ BSL interpreters during meetings when needed. Speakers should be visible, well lit, and standing at the front (for lip reading)
- Ensure videos have captions and virtual meetings have live captions turned on
- Send an email follow-up after meetings and communicate over messaging platforms when appropriate. Automated programmes, such as Microsoft Copilot, are available to summarise meeting notes and identify action points
- Dedicate quiet spaces with minimal background noise to support employees who find loud spaces challenging
- Train staff in deaf awareness to educate employees about effective and inclusive communication practices

Deaf community and culture FAQs

Question	Answer
What's the difference between 'deaf' and 'Deaf' (with a capital 'D')?	The term 'deaf' refers to all levels of deafness. However, 'Deaf' (with a capital 'D') refers to people who see themselves as 'culturally deaf' and a part of the Deaf community; usually they have been deaf all their lives and their first language is sign language.
Is sign language universal?	No, there are over <u>300 different sign languages</u> around the world, each with its own distinct culture. Around 151,000 people in the UK use British Sign Language (BSL).
How should I communicate with a deaf person who uses an interpreter?	Speak directly to the deaf person rather than interpreter. Speak clearly at a normal pace but allow for pauses so the interpreter can process the information and convey it accurately.

Mobility disabilities and accessibility

Mobility disabilities include conditions that limit physical movement, such as using the legs, arms or hands. People with mobility disabilities may have limited balance or dexterity and may rely on aids, such as walking sticks and wheelchairs. Conditions that affect mobility include arthritis, paralysis and musculoskeletal disorders.

Barriers in the workplace

Factors that exclude employees with mobility disabilities in the workplace include:

- **Inaccessible facilities** – Workplaces without step-free access (e.g. lifts or ramps) or accessible bathrooms can make navigating the workplace difficult
- **Inaccessible desks and equipment** – Desks, chairs and equipment that cannot be adjusted to fit an individual's needs can be uncomfortable or cause injury
- **Commuting difficulties** – Inaccessible public transportation can make commuting challenging, affecting workplace punctuality and attendance

Did you know?



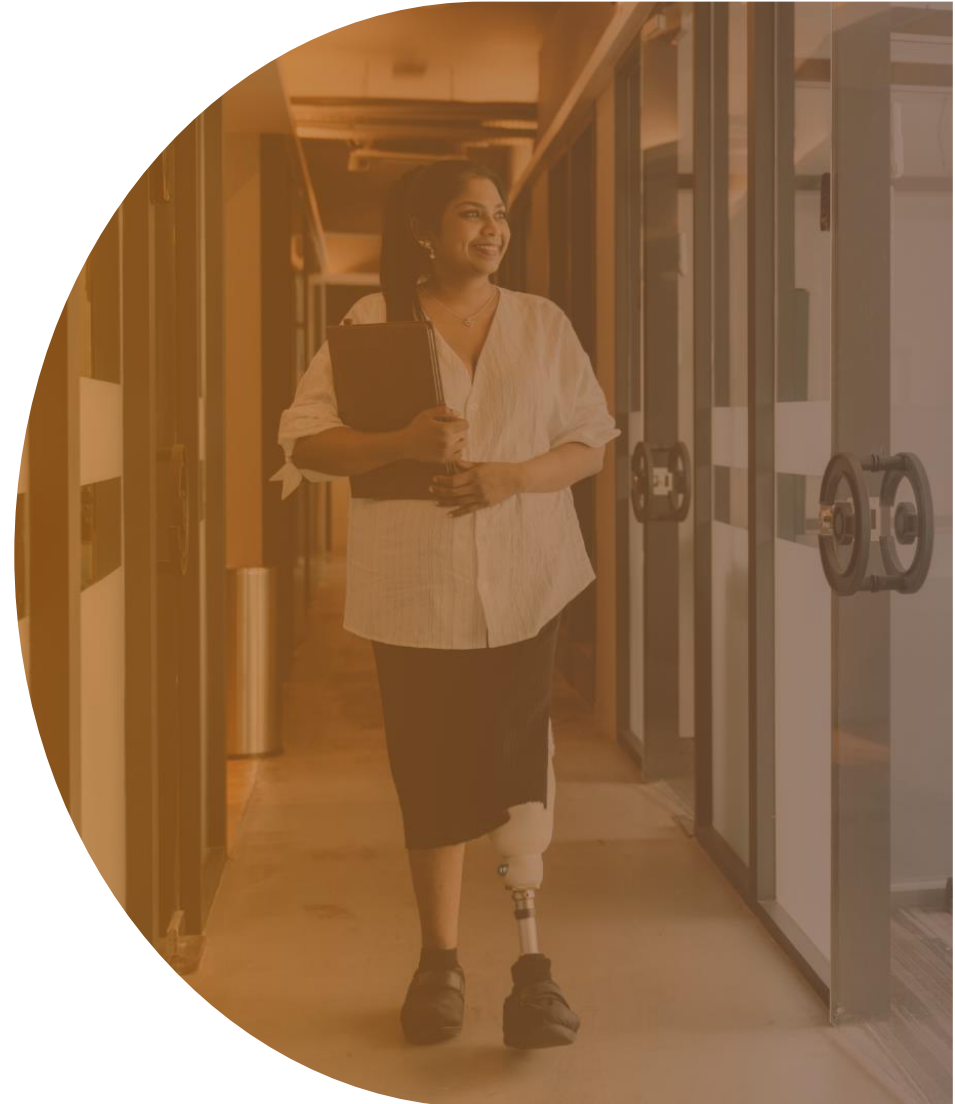
Around 7.6 million people in the UK experience mobility-related disabilities ([Mobility Ahead](#)).

This accounts for 48% of people with disabilities ([Satista](#)).

Mobility accessibility best practices

To be inclusive of employees with mobility disabilities, organisations should:

- Ensure facilities are accessible with ramps, lifts and rails, where appropriate. This includes meeting rooms, workstations and bathrooms
- Ensure main doors are wide, easy to open and have automatic push-button functionality
- Provide ergonomic and adjustable equipment based on the individual's needs
- Offer flexible working options, such as remote working or flexible working hours
- Ensure emergency evacuation procedures accommodate all employees, and all exits are clear and accessible
- Consider reserving parking spaces near building entrances or exits for employees with mobility disabilities
- Ensure corridors and pathways in the workplace remain clear, without obstruction
- Notify employees in advance of any construction work happening in the workplace, as this can affect accessibility



Neurodivergent conditions and accessibility

Neurodivergent conditions include autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and learning disabilities.

Barriers in the workplace

Factors that can make the workplace difficult for employees with neurodivergent conditions include:

- **Sensory overload** – Noisy, crowded or brightly lit workplaces can feel overwhelming for some people
- **Unclear communication** – Ambiguous instructions or figurative language (such as idioms and metaphors) can cause misunderstandings
- **Lack of flexibility in working styles** – Rigid expectations about how work is completed can hinder some employees from doing their best work
- **Interview challenges** – Group interviews and presentation assessments can be difficult for some neurodivergent candidates to navigate

Did you know?



1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability ([Mencap](#)).

Around 15% of the UK population are neurodivergent ([Cognassist](#)).

Neurodivergent accessibility best practices

To be inclusive of employees with neurodivergent conditions, organisations should:

- Use clear language and bullet points (where appropriate) in written materials
- Explain acronyms and industry jargon when used in conversation to avoid misunderstandings
- Provide speech-to-text software that can support employees who are dyslexic or find reading difficult
- Offer quiet spaces, noise-cancelling headphones or low-sensory rooms for focus
- Provide flexible working options and respect different working styles
- In job interviews, offer candidates the option of alternative formats (e.g. video submissions rather than written responses)
- Be explicit when offering feedback, giving specific next steps

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the differences in the way each person's brain processes information.

It is an umbrella term for developmental conditions such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and dyslexia, and it describes individuals who have a brain that works differently to the average – or “neurotypical” – person.

It is important to note that the term “neurodiversity” seeks to acknowledge the inherent and natural differences in our brains, rather than create a “normal” vs “abnormal” comparison.

[View our full definition here.](#)



Download our technical accessibility checklist

Download the checklist

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your diversity and inclusion
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