



BRIEFING PAPER

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Disabled people in employment

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Contents:

1. **Headline figures**
2. **Characteristics of disabled people in employment**
3. **Increasing the number of disabled people in work**
4. **Anti-discrimination legislation**



Contents

1. Headline figures	3
Impact of the coronavirus pandemic	4
1.1 Employment trends	5
1.2 Disability employment gap	5
1.3 Conservative manifesto pledge	6
1.4 Regional employment data	7
2. Characteristics of disabled people in employment	8
2.1 Gender	8
Trend over time	8
2.2 Main health condition/disability	9
2.3 Multiple Health conditions	10
2.4 Employment rate by other characteristics	10
Part-time working	10
Age	10
Qualifications	11
3. Increasing the number of disabled people in work	12
3.1 Access to Work	12
3.2 Disability Confidence	13
3.3 Work and Health Programme	14
3.4 Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme	15
3.5 Personal Support Package	16
Flexible Support Fund	17
3.6 Support for young people	17
3.7 Apprenticeships	19
3.8 Other areas of support	19
4. Anti-discrimination legislation	20
Reasonable adjustments	20

1. Headline figures

The Office for National Statistics have suspended the publication of employment levels for disabled people from the beginning of 2020 onwards. They are currently carrying out a reweighting exercise of this data, which is expected to be completed in July. Further information is available in the ONS article [Labour Force Survey weighting methodology](#).

This Library briefing paper will not be updated until these statistics are republished. Please note that the currently published version of this briefing paper does contain the employment levels data that has subsequently been suspended. This information should be used with caution as it may change when the data is republished.

The ONS continue to publish employment rates for disabled people and this is available in the ONS [A08: Labour market status of disabled people](#) dataset.

In the year to October-December 2020, the **number** of disabled people in employment **has increased**, but the **proportion** of disabled people who are in employment **has fallen**.¹

8.4 million people of working age (16-64) reported that they were disabled in October-December 2020, which is **20%** of the working age population. This is an increase of 327,000 from the year before.

Of these, an estimated **4.4 million** were **in employment**, an increase of 25,000 from a year previously.

52.3% of disabled people were in employment, down from 54.1% a year previously. The employment rate for people who are not disabled was 81.1%, down from 82.2%.

400,000 disabled people were **unemployed**.² This was 76,000 more than the number who were unemployed a year previously.

The unemployment rate for disabled people was **8.4%** in October-December 2020, up from 6.9% a year previously. This compared to an unemployment rate of 4.6% for people who are not disabled.³

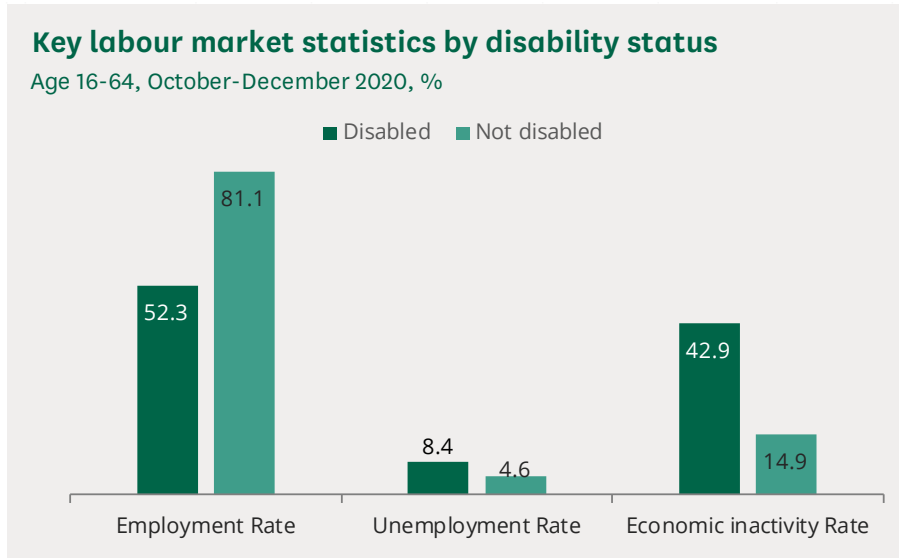
Of the 8.4 million disabled people of working age, 4.4 million (53.6%) are currently in work. This compares to 81.7% of those who are not disabled.

The unemployment rate for disabled people was 8.4% in the latest quarter, compared to 4.6% for those without disabilities.

¹ All figures in this paper are for people aged 16-64 unless stated otherwise.

² Someone is unemployed if they are not in work but are looking for work and are available to start work in the next fortnight.

³ In this paper, the unemployment rate refers to the proportion of economically active people aged 16- 64 who are unemployed, rather than the economically active population aged 16+.



3.6 million disabled people of working age were **economically inactive**. These people were not in work and not looking for work. This was an increase of 226,000 from a year before.⁴

Disabled people were considerably more likely than those who are not disabled to be economically inactive. While, the economic inactivity rate for disabled people was **42.9%**, the corresponding figure for those who are not disabled was 14.9%.

The high rate of economic inactivity, alongside a higher unemployment rate, explains why disabled people have a low employment rate. Disabled people have an **employment rate** that is **28.8 percentage points lower** than that of people who are not disabled. This difference is often referred to as the **disability employment gap**. See [section 1.2](#) for details.

Impact of the coronavirus pandemic

Over the last year the proportion of disabled people who are in employment has gone down, while the proportion who are either unemployed, or economically inactive, has gone up.

The proportion of disabled people who are either unemployed or economically inactive has risen from 45.9% to 47.7% in the year to October-December 2021.

People who are not disabled have also seen an increase in the proportion who are either unemployed or economically inactive, but the increase has been smaller from 17.8% to 18.9%.

This has meant that that the disability employment gap has increased over the last year from 28.1% points to 28.8 percentage points.

The ONS have reported that a higher proportion of disabled employees have been made redundant than employees who are not disabled. In July-November 2020, 21.1 per thousand disabled employees were made

42.6% of those with disabilities were economically inactive in the latest quarter, compared to 15.3% of those without disabilities.

⁴ Someone is economically active if they are either employed or unemployed. Otherwise they are economically inactive.

redundant, compared to 13.0 per thousand employees who are not disabled.⁵

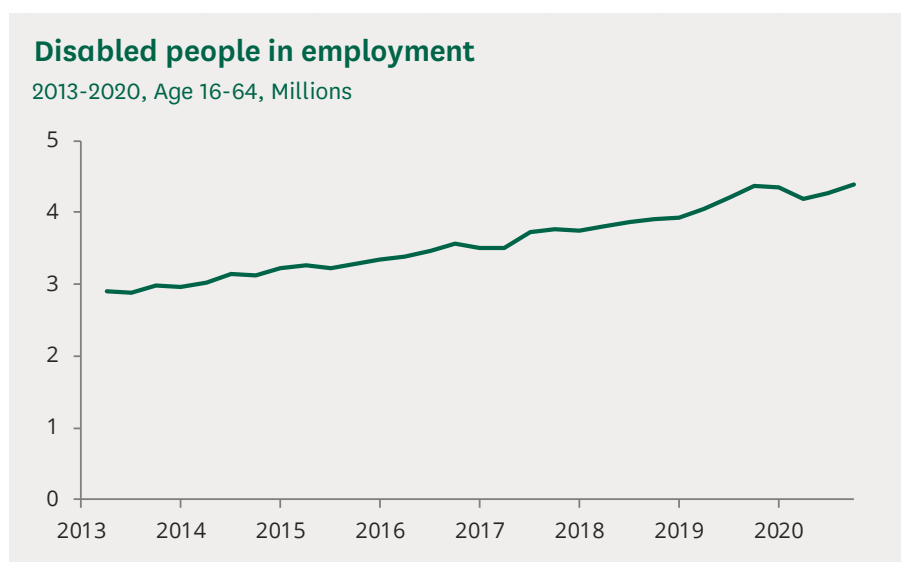
1.1 Employment trends

The number of disabled people who are in employment has been increasing since 2013.

Between October-December 2013 and October-December 2020, the number of disabled people in employment increased by 1.41 million, an increase of 47%. In this period, the number of people in employment who are not disabled increased by 457,000, an increase of 2%.

For context, it is worth noting that the number of disabled people aged 16-64 has increased by 1.65 million, or 24%, during this period.

Over the same period the proportion of disabled people who have been in employment has also increased, from 44.2% in October-December 2013 to 52.3% in October-December 2020.



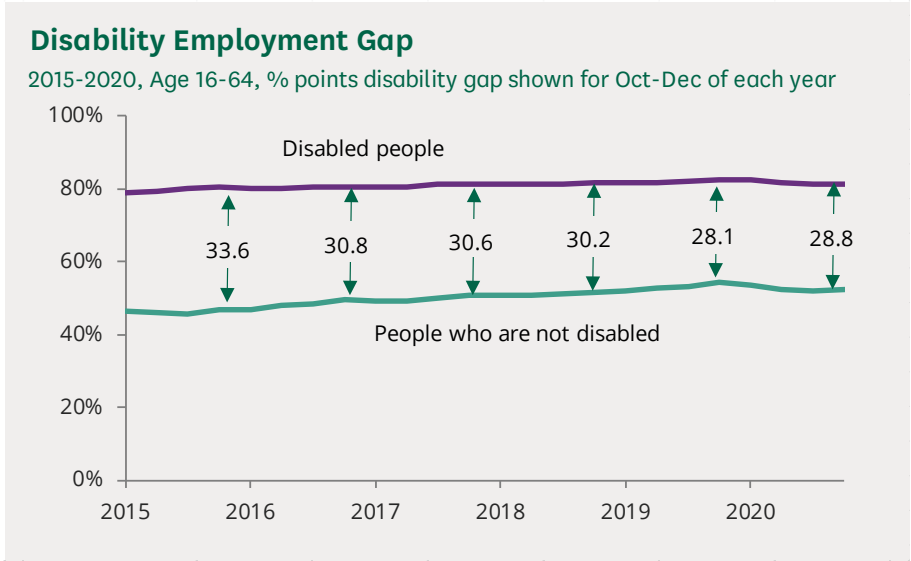
1.2 Disability employment gap

The 'disability employment gap' is the difference in the employment rate of disabled people and people who are not disabled. In October-December 2020, the employment rate for disabled people was 52.3% and the rate for people who are not disabled was 81.1%, meaning that the gap was **28.8 percentage points**.

Between October-December 2013 and October-December 2020, the disability employment gap reduced by 4.9 percentage points. This has been because the employment rate for disabled people has been rising faster than the employment rate for people who are not disabled. In the year to October-December 2020, the gap increased by 0.7 percentage points.

The disability employment gap has increased by **0.7 percentage points** in the last year.

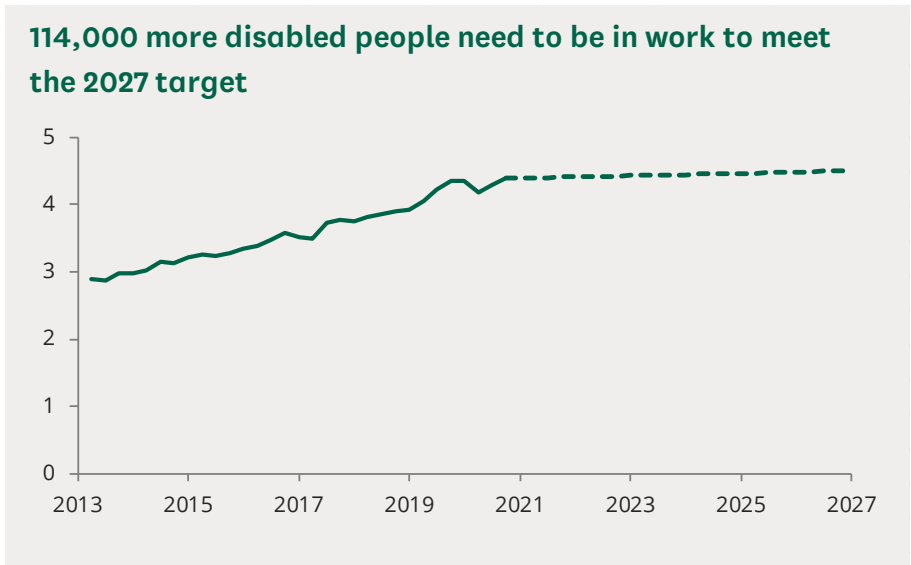
⁵ ONS, [Coronavirus and redundancies in the UK labour market: September to November 2020](#), 19 February 2021



1.3 Conservative manifesto pledge

The Conservative Party 2017 manifesto pledged to get “1 million more people with disabilities into employment over the next ten years”.

To meet this target there would have to be 4.5 million disabled people in employment by 2027, an increase of 114,000 more disabled people in employment. Such an increase would represent growth of 3% on current levels.

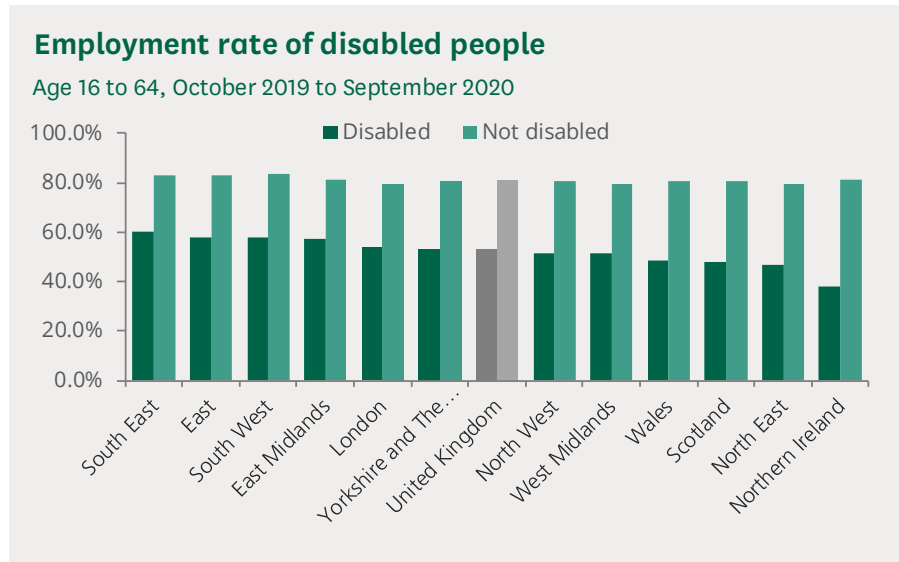


In the Conservative Party 2015 manifesto, the Government had committed to halving the gap between the employment rates for disabled and non-disabled people, although it did not set a deadline for achieving this. Since 2015 the disability employment gap has reduced by 4.8 percentage points. It would need to reduce by around 12 further percentage points to meet the 2015 manifesto commitment.⁶

⁶ Work and Pensions Committee, ['Employment Support Allowance changes' impact questioned](#), April 2017

1.4 Regional employment data

The employment figures for disabled people by region are calculated using 12 months of data, rather than a quarter, and are therefore not directly comparable to statistics used in the rest of this note.



In October 2019-September 2020 the employment rate was highest for people who were disabled in the South East at 60.1%, and lowest in Northern Ireland at 38.1%. The distribution is largely reflective of the overall employment rates within the regions, although the gap between the highest and lowest is much larger for people who are disabled.⁷

For those who are not disabled, the employment rate was lowest in the North East and was highest in the South West. However, the range of values was smaller, from 72.3% in the North East to 83.5% in the South West. This means that the disability employment gap varies widely by region: from 23% in the South East to 43% in Northern Ireland.

⁷ See Library briefing paper [Labour market statistics: UK regions and countries](#) for details on employment rate by region for the whole population.

2. Characteristics of disabled people in employment

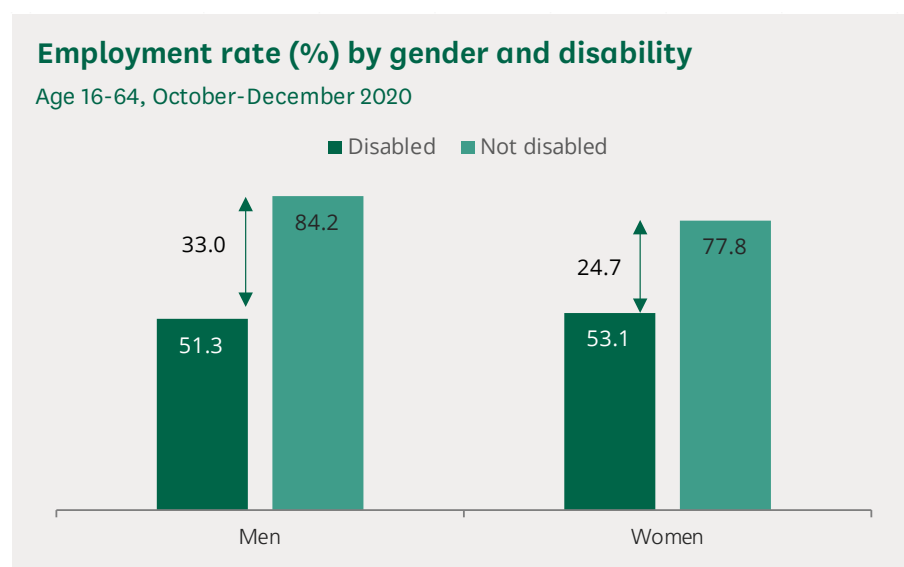
The Department for Work and Pensions have published the employment rates for disabled people, broken down by characteristics, in their [Employment of disabled people 2019](#) statistical release.

2.1 Gender

In October-December 2020, there were **2.6 million disabled women** in work, an employment rate of **53.1%**. In comparison, there were **1.8 million disabled men** in work, an employment rate of **51.3%**.

For those who are not disabled, the employment rate for men was 84.2%, while the rate for women was 77.8%.

The gap between the employment rate for disabled women and those who are not disabled was smaller than the equivalent gap for men. The employment rate for disabled women was 25 percentage points lower than that for women who are not disabled, whereas the gap was 33 percentage points for men.



Disabled men were less likely to be in employment than disabled women.

The reverse is the case for those who are not disabled, with men more likely to be in work.

This means that the disability employment gap is larger for men than for women.

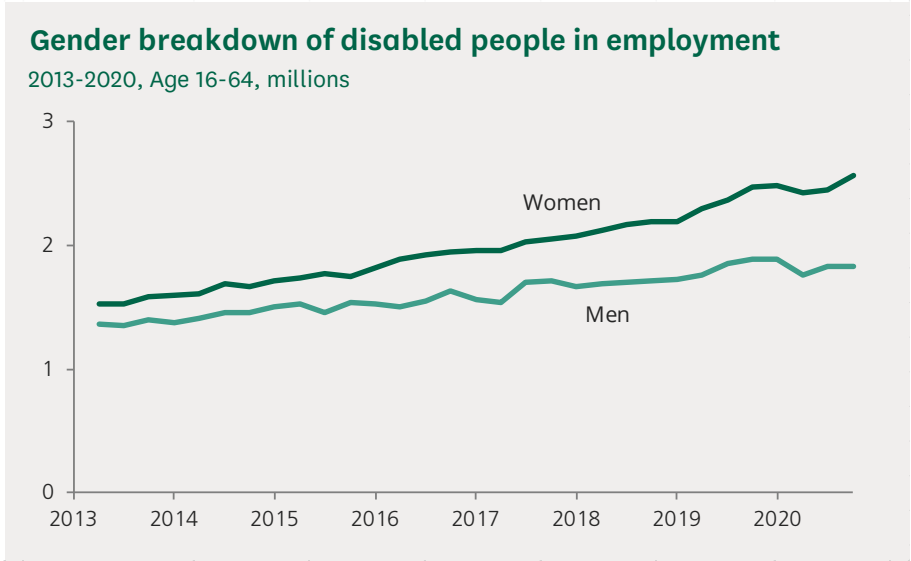
Trend over time

Since 2013, both the number of disabled men and women in employment has been increasing, although at a faster rate for women.

The employment rate for disabled women increased by 10.3 percentage points, from 42.8% in October-December 2013 to 53.1% in October-December 2020.

The employment rate for disabled men increased by 5.4 percentage points, from 45.8% to 51.3%.

Over the same period, the employment rate for women who are not disabled increased by 5.0 percentage points and the rate for men who are not disabled increased by 1.3 percentage points.

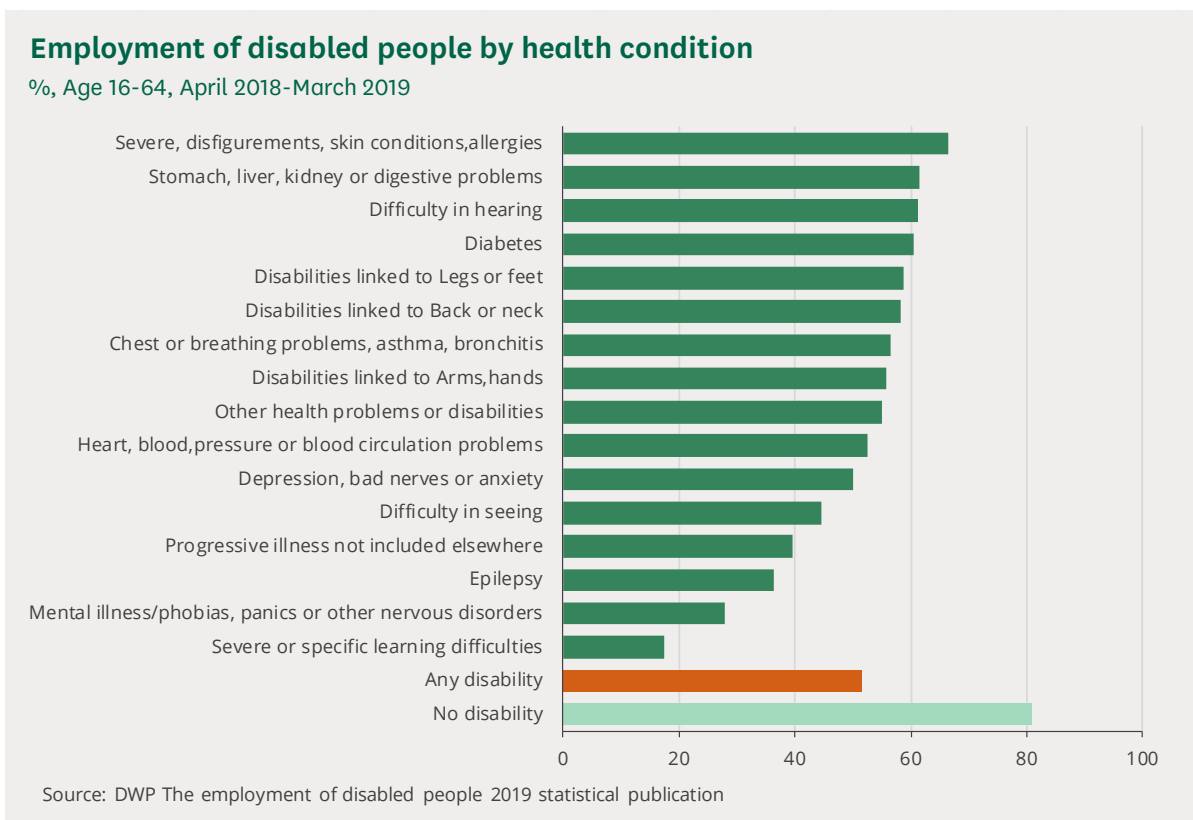


2.2 Main health condition/disability

Employment rates vary considerably depending on the main health condition/disability, as shown in the chart below.

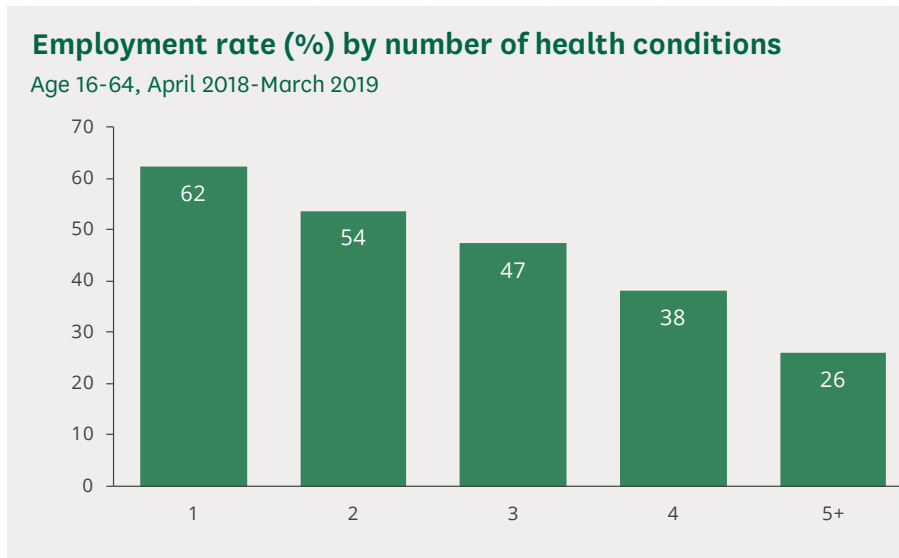
For all health conditions, disabled people had lower employment rates than those who are not disabled. The highest employment rate for a health condition group was still 14 percentage points below the equivalent figure for non-disabled working age adults.

Less than a fifth of people with learning difficulties as their main health condition were in employment.



2.3 Multiple Health conditions

Disabled people who had multiple health conditions had lower employment rates than those with a single health condition. People with one health condition had an employment rate of 62%, but this fell to 26% for those people with five or more health conditions.



2.4 Employment rate by other characteristics

Part-time working

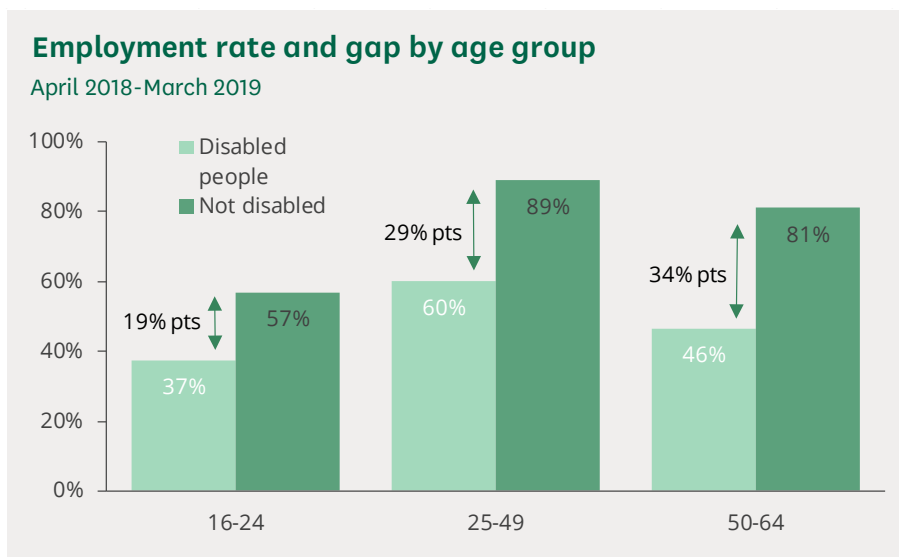
Disabled people in employment were more likely to be working part-time than those who are not disabled.

Of those people who were aged 16-64 and in employment, 34% of disabled people were working part-time in April 2018-March 2019. This compared to 23% of people who are not disabled, and 25% of all people in employment.

Disabled people in employment were more likely to be working part-time than those who are not disabled.

Age

As shown in the chart below, the employment rates of disabled people, and the disability employment gap, varies by age.



Disabled people who were aged between 16 and 24 were least likely to be in employment. However the disability employment gap was largest for those aged 50-64.

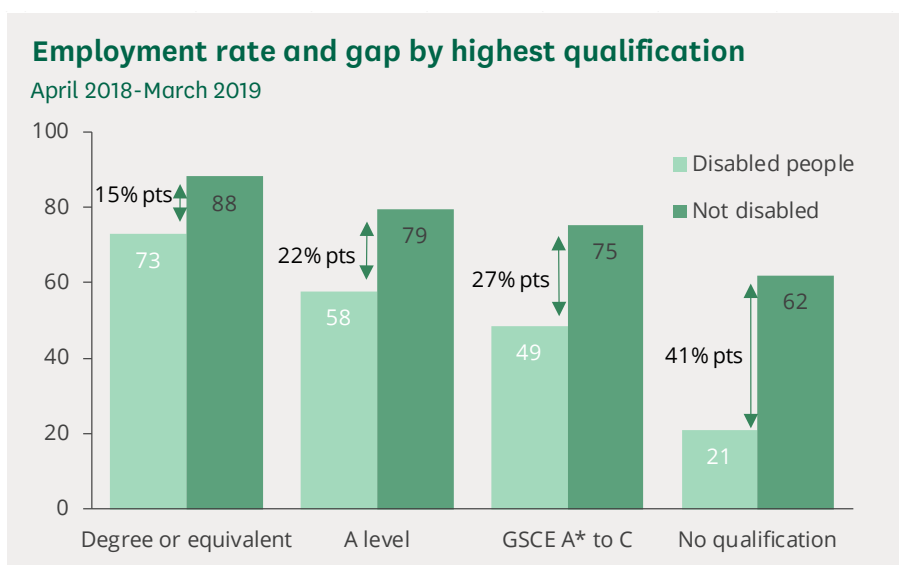
60% of disabled people aged 25-49 were in employment, and this compared to 46% of those aged 50-64 and 37% of those aged 16-24.

The gap between the employment rates of the disabled and non-disabled population was largest for those aged 50-64, at 34 percentage points.

The disability employment gap was especially large for older workers.

Qualifications

The chart below shows how the employment rate varies depending on highest qualification.



For all qualification levels, disabled people had an employment rate below that of people who are not disabled.

The employment gap for disabled people varied widely depending on the highest qualification, from 21% for those without any qualifications to 73% for those with a degree or equivalent qualification.

The gap for people who are not disabled was much smaller, from 62% for those without qualifications to 88% for those with a degree or equivalent qualification.

The employment rate for disabled people who had a degree or equivalent qualification was slightly below the rate for people who are not disabled with GCSE grades A-C or equivalent as their highest qualification.

The employment gap between those who are and are not disabled was bigger for those without a qualification.

3. Increasing the number of disabled people in work

In November 2017, the government set out its 10 year plan on how it intends to get a million more disabled people into employment by 2027 in the [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#) White Paper. The strategy is partly based on supporting disabled people and long-term health conditions to find work, but also to provide investment to support these people to stay in work.

In the White Paper, the government reported that finding work for an additional 1% of eligible Employment and Support Allowance claimants in 2018/19 would save the Exchequer £240 million, and provide a boost to the economy of £260 million.⁸

In March 2017, the government launched the Personal Support Package, which provided £330 million to support disabled people to find work.⁹

The government has announced that it will work with disability organisations and charities to develop and publish a National Strategy for Disabled People, which it originally intended to publish before the end of 2020. This will look at ways to improve access to work for disabled people. Plans for the strategy are being reviewed due to the coronavirus pandemic, but the Government plans to publish the strategy this year.^{10 11 12}

The main policies and proposals relating to employment support for disabled people are explained in brief below, although this is not an exhaustive list.

3.1 Access to Work

[Access to Work](#) provides support to meet the needs of disabled people in the workplace. Access to Work grants are available to both employees and to the self-employed, and aim to provide practical and financial support to help disabled people find or stay in work.

Access to Work provision was approved for 39,000 people in 2019/20. This provision included elements such as:¹³

- Communication support for interviews
- Special aids and equipment
- Adaptations to premises and vehicles

⁸ DWP, [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#), 30 November 2017, p6

⁹ DWP, [Welfare reforms and £330 million employment package start from April 2017](#), 31 March 2017

¹⁰ [PO 6070](#), 27 January 2020

¹¹ Cabinet Office, [A National Strategy for Disabled People to remove barriers and increase participation](#), 2 April 2020

¹² [PO HL14240](#), 22 March 2021

¹³ DWP, [Access to Work Statistics](#), 9 September 2020, table 1

- Help with travel costs
- Support workers
- A mental health support service

The maximum annual amount that an individual can receive has been set at £60,700 from 1 April 2020. This is updated annually every April.¹⁴

Employers may be expected to pay some of the cost of the elements that are implemented by Access to Work.

As part of the Personal Support Package, an extra 1,000 **Mental Health Support Service** places were announced. This service provides 6 months of support to start a new job as part of the Access to Work scheme.¹⁵

In 2019/20, 7,600 people were approved to receive mental health support as part of the scheme, compared to 4,500 in 2018/19.¹⁶

Further information on the Access to Work scheme is provided in the library briefing [‘Access to Work’ scheme for disabled people](#) (February 2020).

3.2 Disability Confidence

[Disability Confident](#) aims to help organisations “improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers”.

As of March 2021, almost 20,000 employers had signed up to the Disability Confident scheme.¹⁷

There are three levels of the Disability Confident Scheme:

- **Disability Confident Committed** - an employer needs to agree to the Disability Confident commitments (see box to the right), which they should be carrying out within 12 months of becoming Disability Confident. They also need to commit to offer a disabled person an opportunity within their organisation, and again this should be in place within 12 months of them becoming Disability Confident.¹⁸
- **Disability Confident Employer** - the employer needs to show they are actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people, that they support disabled staff within their organisation and that they are making reasonable adjustments as required. They also need to commit to various actions to both encourage disabled people to join their organisation, and to develop the disabled people within their organisation.¹⁹
- **Disability Confident Leader** – the employer will be independently validated in whether they are meeting the criteria for a Disability Confident Leader, and show that they are

Disability Confident commitments:

1. Inclusive and accessible recruitment
2. Communicating vacancies
3. Offering an interview to disabled people
4. Providing reasonable adjustments
5. Supporting existing employees who develop a disability to stay in work

¹⁴ DWP, [Access to Work guidance for employers](#)

¹⁵ DWP, [March 2017: Touchbase edition 119](#)

¹⁶ DWP, [Access to Work Statistics](#), 9 September 2020, table 2

¹⁷ DWP, [Disability Confident: employers that have signed up](#), 2 March 2021

¹⁸ DWP, [Level 1: Disability Confident Committed guidance](#), July 2017

¹⁹ DWP, [Level 2: Disability Confident Employer guidance](#), July 2017

14 Disabled people in employment

encouraging and supporting other employers to become Disability Confident.²⁰

Of the 19,961 employers signed up the scheme in July 2020,²¹

- 15,992 were Disability Confident Committed (80%)
- 3,625 were Disability Confident Employers (18%)
- 344 were Disability Confident Leaders (2%)

All main government departments are Disability Confident Leaders

The DWP have reported that it is not possible to accurately estimate how many disabled people these employers employ.²²

At a Westminster Hall Debate on the Disability Confident scheme in January 2018, the then Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Marsha de Cordova, stated that there is little evidence that the scheme is enabling more disabled people to find sustainable and supportive employment.²³

Following this, the DWP did publish an evaluation of the scheme that concluded that it had a positive impact on recruitment, with half of surveyed employers reporting that they had recruited at least one disabled individual as a result of joining the scheme.²⁴

3.3 Work and Health Programme

The Work and Health Programme is an employment support programme which was launched in North West England and Wales in November 2017. The programme rolled out across the rest of England during early 2018.²⁵

The Programme provides support to help people find and keep a job. It is available, on a voluntary basis, to those with health conditions or disabilities, and to various groups of vulnerable people. The programme is compulsory for those who have been unemployed for over two years.

A participant is classed as achieving a job outcome when they have reached a specified level of earnings once in employment, or reach six months of being in self-employment.²⁶

The Government had reported that the programme will support 275,000 people over 5 years, including 220,000 disabled people.²⁷

As part of the July 2020 *Plan for Jobs*, this programme will be expanded in Great Britain to provide additional voluntary support for those on benefits that have been unemployed for more than 3 months.²⁸

This expansion will have no impact on the existing provision for those with illnesses or disabilities in England and Wales.

²⁰ DWP, [Level 3: Disability Confident Leader guidance](#), July 2017

²¹ DWP, [Disability Confident: employers that have signed up](#), 16 September 2019

²² [PQ HL167](#), 14 January 2020

²³ HC Deb 10 Jan 2018, [Disability Confident Scheme](#), c133WH

²⁴ DWP, [Disability Confident Scheme](#), November 2018, p10

²⁵ DWP, [April 2018: Touchbase edition 126](#), 23 May 2018

²⁶ [PQ HL5940](#), 2 July 2020

²⁷ [PQ 880](#), 21 October 2019

²⁸ HM Treasury, [Plan for Jobs](#), 8 July 2020, p9

Up to November 2020:

- There had been 216,500 referrals to the programme, with the majority of these being disabled people.
- 184,300 individuals have been referred. There can be multiple referrals per individual.
- 133,900 individuals had started on the programme.
- Around three quarters of the individuals who had been referred had started on the programme.
- There had been almost 21,000 job outcomes, meaning they had reached a specified level of earnings or has been in self-employment for six months.²⁹

The Work and Health Programme replaced the [Work Programme](#) and [Work Choice schemes](#).

Further information on this programme is available in the Library briefing note [Work and Health Programme](#) (June 2020).

3.4 Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme

The [Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme](#) launched in late 2019, and provides personalised support to those with more complex needs or barriers. This programme aims to benefit 10,000 people.³⁰

People on this programme will have a dedicated support worker who will provide one-to-one support and training to help them get into work. They will usually receive this support for 15 months, as well as 6 months of on-the-job support if they find employment.

There are two job outcome measures: a lower threshold income measure, which is defined as earnings equivalent to eight hours per week for 26 weeks; and a higher threshold, which is the equivalent to 16 hours per week for 26 weeks.³¹

Support for those with the greatest needs and in the most complex situations had previously been provided through [Specialist Employability Support](#) (SES). SES is aimed at those people whose barriers to work mean they are unable to access the support they need through other provision. SES closed to new referrals in November 2019.³²

In the 4 years that the programme was open, there were 9,720 referrals and 7,020 starts. 16% of those who started on the programme moved into sustained employment.³³

²⁹ DWP, [Work and Health Programme statistics to November 2019](#), February 2021

³⁰ [PO 161806](#), 10 March 2021

³¹ [PO HL5940](#), 2 July 2020

³² DWP, [Specialist Employability Support guidance: effective from November 2018](#)

³³ DWP, [Specialist Employability Support statistics to September 2020](#), 25 November 2020

3.5 Personal Support Package

The Personal Support Package was rolled out from April 2017 onwards. The initiative offers tailored employment support for disabled people, delivered through Jobcentre Plus.³⁴

The Government has reported that £330 million will be spent on this four year package.³⁵

The support from Jobcentre Plus that was available through this initiative was revised in April 2019:

- A new **Disability Employment Adviser Leader** role was created. Adviser Leaders manage a team of Disability Employment Advisers, and will work with internal and external partners to support claimants with disabilities to move into work. As of December 2019, there were 98 full-time equivalent Leaders in place across the Jobcentre Network.^{36 37}
- The **Disability Employment Adviser** role was revised, incorporating elements of the Community Partner and Small Employer Adviser roles (see below). Disability employment advisers are specially trained to help disabled people to find suitable jobs, and work alongside work coaches to provide additional professional expertise. The Government had committed to more than doubling the number of these advisers to over 500, and during the 2019/20 financial year, there were 685 Advisers in place.^{38 39 40}

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-new-support-for-disabled-jobseekers?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=85c5e4ec-4ff4-498a-9fbc-5a14d68a8311&utm_content=daily

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/178586>

The Government has reported that more than 800 people will be employed in roles that will support Jobcentre colleagues to provide services to disabled people and those with health conditions.⁴¹

Two other posts had been put in place when the Personal Support Package was first rolled out:

- **Community Partners** provided expert knowledge of disability, and supported work coaches and Disability Employment Advisers.

³⁴ DWP, [Welfare reforms and £330 million employment package start from April 2017](#), 31 March 2017

³⁵ [PQ 880](#), 21 October 2019

³⁶ DWP, [Disability Employment Adviser Leader job description](#)

³⁷ [PQ 4761](#), 27 January 2020

³⁸ DWP, [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#), 30 November 2017, p55

³⁹ [HCWS66](#), 31 October 2019

⁴⁰ [PQ 146856](#), 4 February 2021

⁴¹ [PQ 290896](#), 04 October 2019

These roles were funded for a two year period which ended in March 2019. There had been 182 Community Partners in place in November 2018.^{42 43}

- **Small Employer Advisers** were recruited to raise awareness with small employers of the support available to them when employing a person with a long-term health condition or disability.

New **training for work coaches** (frontline Jobcentre staff) was introduced as part of the Health and Work Conversation (see box to right) with the aim of improving the working relationships that work coaches form with their customers. By the end of March 2019, all work coaches had undertaken Mental Health training.^{44 45}

The Department for Work and Pensions worked with nine local authorities on a Proof of Concept for a **Local Supported Employment** scheme. This will support people with a learning difficulty or autism. The Proof of Concept ran until May 2019, and it is not yet apparent whether there will be a full trial of this scheme.^{46 47}

Flexible Support Fund

As part of the Personal Support Package the Government committed to provide extra funding to the **Flexible Support Fund** (FSF). The FSF gives Jobcentre Plus Districts greater freedom to tailor back-to-work support to individual and local need. Working within local guidelines and priorities, Jobcentre Plus advisers have discretion to decide how to help individuals move closer to or into work.⁴⁸

The Government recently announced that parents may be eligible to receive a Flexible Support Fund Award or a budgeting advance to enable them to take up a job offer or increase their working hours. The Government has stated that:⁴⁹

Where upfront childcare costs or deposits may prevent a claimant from starting work, jobcentres have been instructed to use the Flexible Support Fund to support the transition into work.⁵⁰

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, in July 2020 the Government announced that it will increase the funding for the Flexible Support Fund by £150 million in Great Britain. This funding will also increase the capacity of the [Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Service](#).⁵¹

3.6 Support for young people

Some of the employment support that the Government provides for disabled people is aimed specifically at young disabled people.⁵²

The **Health and Work conversation** takes place between a work coach and new people claiming Employment Support Allowance. It focuses on what they can do, rather than what they cannot do.

⁴² Base, [DWP to introduce enhanced disability advisor roles](#), 25 March 2019

⁴³ [PQ 190788](#), 19 November 2018

⁴⁴ DWP/DoH, [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#), pp 16-18

⁴⁵ [PQ 238369](#), 4 April 2019

⁴⁶ [PQ 4760](#), 27 January 2020

⁴⁷ BASE, [Supported Employment Proof on Concept](#)

⁴⁸ DWP/DoH, [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#), p55

⁴⁹ [PQ 226593](#), 5 March 2019

⁵⁰ [PQ HL13861](#), 25 February 2019

⁵¹ HM Treasury, [Plan for Jobs](#), 8 July 2020, p10

⁵² [PQ 904565](#), 26 March 2018

The **Jobcentre Plus Support for Schools** programme aims to provide targeted high quality careers advice. One group that this is targeted at is young people aged 12-18 who, due to a health or disability issue, face a potential disadvantage in the labour market.

This support was rolled out nationally across England in November 2016. An evaluation of the support, carried out in April 2018, reported that the programme “was seen as positive in engaging with students from a wide range of schools” and that the targeted support “was felt to have a greater effect on student outcomes”. It also states that more resources, or a focus on more specific groups, will be required as demand for this support grows.⁵³

The Schools Week website reported that the programme was extended in October 2019, with 90 extra advisors employed to work between Jobcentres and schools. The article also reports that the programme had worked with more than 1,400 schools.⁵⁴

Supported Internships have been in place since September 2013, and look to provide “coherent, personalised, learning programmes” to help disabled young people move into employment.

In January 2020, 2,231 young people with statements of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plans were taking part in these internships. This was an increase from 1,646 in January 2019 and from 1,186 in January 2018.⁵⁵

In 2018, a number of projects targeted at young people were at the “proof of concept” stage:⁵⁶

- The **Young Person’s Supported Work Experience programme** provides a “personally tailored supported work experience opportunity” for young people aged 18-24. This was being tested in five Jobcentre Plus districts.
- **Tri-Work** is a supported work experience scheme aimed at young people with special educational needs in years 10 and 11 in schools and special schools. This was being tested in three local authorities.
- The **Local Supported Employment ‘place and train’ model** aims to move disabled people into real jobs, at the going rate of pay, with support for both the individual and employer. This was being tested in nine local authorities.

It is not clear whether there will be full trials of any of these projects.

In addition, the Government has funded specialist training to improve **careers advice** for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.⁵⁷

⁵³ DWP, [Jobcentre Plus Support for Schools: qualitative national roll-out evaluation report](#), 9 April 2018

⁵⁴ Schoolsweek.co.uk, [DWP extends Jobcentre support for schools programme with £7m funding](#), 11 October 2019

⁵⁵ [PQ 133132](#), 13 January 2021

⁵⁶ [PQ 133523](#), 28 March 2018

⁵⁷ [PQ 120168](#), 21 December 2017

3.7 Apprenticeships

In 2019/20, 12.2% (39,000) of **apprenticeship starts** were learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Government had set in place a target of 20% by 2020.^{58 59}

In Autumn 2017 changes were made to the regular English and maths apprenticeships requirements for people with a learning difficulty or disability, in response to a Government-commissioned report from a [taskforce led by Paul Maynard](#). The expectation is that this will make apprenticeships more accessible to people with disabilities.

The [Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network](#) was also set up in 2017 to encourage disabled people to consider apprenticeships. This now has over 70 members. Members are expected to take steps to improve the diversity and inclusion of apprenticeships, and some members have set “aspirational targets” for the number of apprentices in their organisation who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.⁶⁰

3.8 Other areas of support

Existing employment schemes and initiatives that will continue to operate include:

- [Fit for Work](#) offers free, expert and impartial advice to anyone looking for help with issues around health and work, but it is going to close at the end of March 2021. The White Paper had reported that the scheme had very low take-up, and that the current model of Occupational Health provision does not meet the needs of employers or individuals.
- The [New Enterprise Allowance](#) helps jobseekers start or develop their own business, including disabled jobseekers. In the White Paper the Government reports that it will research the barriers that disabled people may experience in self-employment.

⁵⁸ House of Commons Library Briefing Paper [Apprenticeship statistics for England](#), 9 April 2020, p13

⁵⁹ [PQ 3751](#), 28 October 2019

⁶⁰ DWP/DoH, [Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability](#), p 60

4. Anti-discrimination legislation

The [Equality Act 2010](#) prohibits both direct and indirect disability discrimination in employment and recruitment.

Direct disability discrimination occurs where an employer treats a disabled person less favourably because they are disabled.

Indirect disability discrimination occurs where an employer applies a policy, criterion or practice which has the effect of putting a disabled person at a particular disadvantage as compared with non-disabled persons. Indirect discrimination may be lawful if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Discrimination arising from disability occurs where an employer treats a person unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability. It differs from direct discrimination in that the unfavourable treatment is because of something arising from the disability, not the disability itself. Further, unlike indirect discrimination the person does not need to show that the employer was applying a provision that puts (or would put) persons sharing that person's disability at a particular disadvantage. It is sufficient to show that they were treated unfavourably because of something arising from *their* disability. Discrimination arising from disability may be lawful if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The Act also prohibits employers from harassing or victimising disabled people.

Reasonable adjustments

As part of the [Equality Act 2010](#), employers must make **reasonable adjustments** to support disabled job applicants and employees. As stated in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) guidance:

This means ensuring disabled people can overcome any substantial disadvantages they may have doing their jobs and progressing in work.

The DWP has published guidance on [Employing disabled people and people with health conditions](#). It states that:

- The costs of making reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled employees are often low.
- The benefits of retaining an experienced, skilled employee who has acquired an impairment are usually greater than recruiting and training new staff.

Examples of reasonable adjustments included in the guidance and on the gov.uk page [Reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or health conditions](#) are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list of potential adjustments.

- Making changes to a disabled person's working pattern. Allow those who have become disabled to make a phased return to work.

- Doing things another way, such as allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking, or allowing someone with a wheelchair to work on the ground floor.
- Providing training or mentoring. This will include training to non-disabled workers on how they can be more inclusive to disabled people.
- Either employing a support worker to assist a disabled worker, or arrange for a colleague to assist them with certain tasks.
- Making alterations to premises, like installing a ramp for a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person.
- Ensuring that information is provided in accessible formats, for example in Braille or on audio tape.
- Modifying or acquiring equipment, such as special keyboards for those with arthritis.
- Changing the recruitment process. Modify procedures for testing or assessment to ensure they don't disadvantage people with particular disabilities.
- Allowing extra time during selection tests.

[Access to Work](#) funding can be applied for towards the cost of making such reasonable adjustments.

The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) has provided [Examples of reasonable adjustments in practice](#).

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