



Diversity Task Force



Assistive Technology Quick Guide for Employers

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Assistive Technology

This guide covers:

- What is assistive technology?
- Why assistive technology is good for business
- Simple things you can do now, small adjustments make a big difference
- Where you can get more support and advice

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology is software and digital tools that empower people with disabilities to be more independent and to help them overcome barriers in the workplace. Under the Equality Act 2010, assistive technology is considered a reasonable adjustments (see our [Quick Employer Guide on Reasonable Adjustments](#))

According to [Thriver.co.uk](#), assistive technology can be used in a number of ways, from simple tools and adaptations to more complex computer systems. It is important to remember that not all assistive technologies are high-tech – sometimes the simplest solutions can be the most effective.

Some common examples of assistive technologies important to the work environment include:

- [Ergonomic office devices](#)
- [Speech recognition software](#)
- [Mind-mapping devices](#)
- [Literacy technology](#)

Why assistive technology is good for business

Assistive technology is important because it helps to level the playing field for employees with disabilities. It can help them to stay in employment and be productive members of the workforce with fewer barriers.

The right assistive technology can benefit all employees, not just those with disabilities, in many ways. Some examples are:

- improved communication and work performance
- better workplace communication
- ability to navigate the workplace more easily and safely
- support to stay productive for longer periods of time
- positive impact on workplace culture
- improved motivation and productivity

You can take things one step further by using assistive technology to ensure your website and your products and services are also accessible to people with disabilities.

The organisation [Celebrating Disability](#) says that without accessibility features, many disabled web users will not be able to use your website effectively. 1 in 5 UK consumers have a disability, so you could therefore be missing out on the Purple Pound. The Purple Pound is the spending power of disabled people in the UK and is worth £274 billion per year. Considering accessibility and inclusion can support disabled customers to feel welcome and valued in your business.

Simple things you can do now, small adjustments make a big difference

By making some small changes, you can send a strong message to your employees, potential employees, customers and potential customers that everyone is welcome in your workplace and by your business.

Many workplaces are set up with no thought to helping disabled people up to succeed. Given the pivotal role that IT plays in most jobs, it is vital that computer workstations are made accessible for people with a range of disabilities. Read more at [Celebrating Disability](#) blog on assistive technology in the workplace.

Most operating systems already have free assistive technology available and it may just be a case of switching it on.

Check accessibility settings of the current operating systems in your business

The [Accessibility in Government blog](#) recommends looking for accessibility settings in whichever system you use and trying them out. You may be surprised at what's available for free.

You can find them quite easily:

- **Windows:** Start > Settings > Ease of Access
- **macOS:** System Preferences > Accessibility
- **iOS:** Settings > General > Accessibility
- **Android:** Settings > Accessibility

Take a look at what is provided in your current systems and be clear with communication on how to turn it on, for everyone working in your business.

Microsoft provide accessibility tools for [neurodiversity](#), [vision](#), [hearing](#), [learning](#), [mobility](#) and [mental health](#).

Apple MacOS provide accessibility tools for [vision](#), [hearing & speaking](#), [mobility](#) and [general accessibility features](#).

Clearly communicate and signpost to all employees free programmes and apps that are also available, such as:

- [Grammarly](#) - a free writing app to make your writing clear and effective
- [TalkTypers](#) - free speech to text dictation software in a browser
- [Marinara Timer](#) – to help focus, set a timer which sets aside dedicated time to work and then lets you know when to take a break
- [Seeing AI](#) – provides audio descriptions of people, text, objects etc
- [NVDA](#) - free screen reader which enables vision impaired people to use computers

See [Scope.org.uk](#) for a range of phone and tablet apps can help remove some of the barriers faced by people with disabilities in daily life. Some are free and some come with a cost.

Conduct a staff survey to understand office/home health & wellbeing

Consider making available other assistive office technology as an outcome of the results of the survey.

- **Ergonomic keyboards** – minimise discomfort and strain in hands, wrists, shoulders and back
- **Screen magnifiers** – used to make text on screen bigger
- **Microphone headsets** – assistance talking on the phone.

Create a policy on inclusive writing styles and formatting

Help employees to create accessible documents, considering inclusive fonts and font sizes, contrast and text colour etc. Go to [UK Association for Accessible Formats](#) website for further help to deliver high-quality services that meet the needs of people who are print impaired.

Conduct an accessibility check on your website

This means checking that it meets the [international WCAG 2.1 AA standard](#). See [Gov.uk Accessibility Check](#) to understand whether you are required to do a detailed check or a basic check. This will depend on the size and cost implications for your business.

There are free website accessibility programmes that can help guide you with this such as [Accessibility Checker](#) or [Wave](#).

Where you can get more information and advice

[Business Disability Forum](#) – research on assistive technology in employment

[AbilityNet](#) – general advice and consultancy services

[WorkSafeUK](#) – provides assistive technology assessments



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