

Everyone Matters Guide to



Making reasonable adjustments during coronavirus



A supplement to our Everyone Matters Guide to
Supporting Disability in the Workplace

Key to icons



Action set



Extra resources



Point of interest



Critical issue

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Introduction

This guide helps line managers and all Network Rail employees understand our responsibilities around disabled employees, specifically as we make changes to the way we work in response to coronavirus. This supplements our main [‘Supporting Disability in the Workplace’ guide](#) and signposts our existing reasonable adjustments materials.

Context

For many of our employees, managing a long-term health condition or impairment is part of everyday life.

As we work from home, return to the workplace or continue to work in operational environments, the impacts on our lives caused by coronavirus mean this is a good time to start talking about (or revisit) reasonable adjustments that may be required. As well as being the right thing to do for our people, our duty to make reasonable adjustments remains as we navigate through these uncertain times.



At Network Rail we follow the social model of disability – this means that this guide is concerned with the barriers faced by our disabled employees, not the medical reason for the health condition. It does not replace any existing policies or guidance published around health and safety, occupational health or health assessments processes.

Although this guide provides useful pointers, it’s important that as a line manager you have a conversation with the employee as the starting point for any adjustment process. You should also log any agreed adjustments with HR Direct. More detail on this can be found on page 2 of the main [‘Supporting Disability in the Workplace’ guide](#).

Definition of disability

Disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as, “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” ‘Substantial’ is defined as being “more than minor or trivial”, which means that the threshold to be met is a relatively low one. “long-term” is defined as lasting more than 12 months, or likely to last more than 12 months.



In some cases, an individual may appear to have no symptoms or adverse effects because their condition is fluctuating, or controlled by medication; for example, someone who has had an organ transplant but has to take immunosuppressant drugs for life. However, the Equality Act 2010 states that when considering the effect of an impairment or health condition upon an individual, any treatment must be disregarded.

This is important; people managing long term health conditions are extremely likely to be covered by the definition of disability as their health condition **must** be considered without the effects of their medication.

There is no legal obligation for employees to tell their employer that they have a health condition (unless this poses a health and safety risk) and there may be employees who have not previously shared that they have a long-term health condition. They may now share this with you now as coronavirus and the associated new ways of working have impacted the ways they manage their condition. This should be treated sensitively with confidentiality maintained.



Further information on the definition of disability can be found on page 3 of the main [Supporting Disability in the Workplace](#) guide.

The duty to make Reasonable Adjustments

All employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove disadvantages faced by disabled employees.

When you know (or could be expected to know) that one of your team has a long-term health condition or impairment, you have a duty to take steps to remove, reduce or prevent the barriers that the person faces at work.

When deciding whether it would be reasonable to make an adjustment, we must consider all relevant circumstances. These include, but are not limited to:

- how effective the change will be to reduce or remove the disadvantage the disabled employee would experience
- its practicality
- the cost
- our organisation's resources and size
- the availability of financial support, such as the [Access to Work](#) scheme.

The overall aim should be, as far as possible, to remove or reduce any substantial disadvantage faced by the employee.



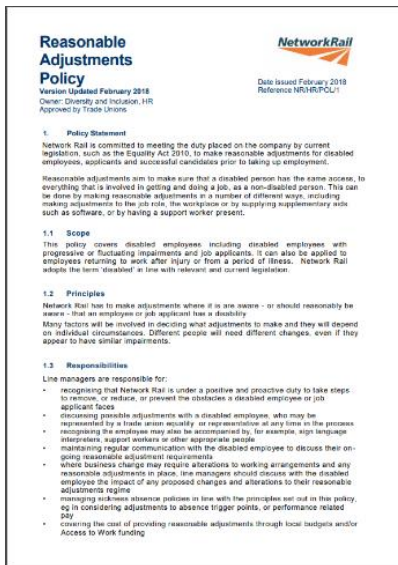
For more information on the duty to make reasonable adjustments see page 4 in the main [Supporting Disability in the Workplace](#) guide.

Reasonable Adjustments at a glance

The following documents describe how reasonable adjustments are discussed, recorded and actioned at Network Rail, click on the image to go to the document



Reasonable Adjustments Policy



Reasonable Adjustments Discussion Form (Passport)

Reasonable Adjustments Discussion Form

Use the below form to discuss with the employee their needs and set out the adjustments requested and confirm whether they can be implemented.

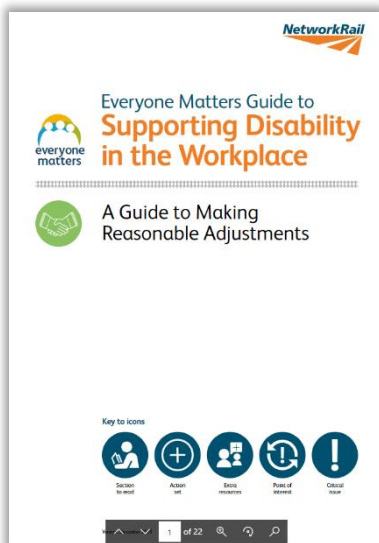
Please use the [Reasonable Adjustments Navigator Toolkit](#) in this process

Employee Name	
Employee Number	
Job Title	
Department	
Line Manager	

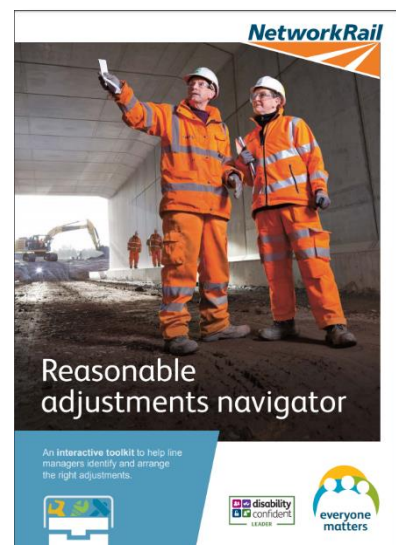
- Description of any disadvantage (or barriers) experienced by the employee
- Describe the reasonable adjustment(s) requested or recommended.
- How will these adjustments assist the individual to carry out their work more effectively?

Reasonable Adjustment Assessment Form 2018 V6

Everyone Matters Guide to Supporting Disability in the Workplace



Reasonable Adjustments navigator toolkit



Types of Reasonable Adjustment



There are three types of reasonable adjustment:

1. Changing the 'way things are done', such as changing the application of Network Rail's policies and practices.

For example, being flexible and changing working hours which could go beyond that of a 'fixed' flexible working arrangement or allowing a higher limit on expensed items such as a vertical mouse specifically for relieving the problems associated with RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury).

2. Changes to overcome barriers caused by the physical features of a workplace.

For example, adding signs or other indicators to Perspex screens which have been fitted to the workplace due to COVID19, so that they become more visible for people with visual impairments.

3. Providing extra equipment or assistive technology to help the disabled employee do their job.

For example, supporting an employee who is deaf or has a hearing impairment by organising a speech to text provider, providing a specialist phone or by providing a BSL interpreter to join video conference meetings.

There is no one-size-fits-all when making reasonable adjustments - they should always be considered on a case by case basis.

Working from Home



For many of our employees, working from home on an extended basis is a new experience. For our disabled employees, this may mean the adjustments they had agreed previously are no longer working in the same way as when they were based in our workplaces.

Some adjustments may have been quickly put in place at the beginning of the 'working from home' period. Any reasonable adjustments agreed in this way should be reassessed to consider whether they are still effective, recorded in the Reasonable Adjustments Discussion Form (passport) and sent to HR Direct.

Line managers should take the opportunity to regularly review existing adjustments with the employee. Other adjustments that may be required now or in future should also be discussed.

Useful links:



Network Rail's working from home guidance [can be found here](#)

The [mental wellbeing hub](#) and the [welfare and wellbeing hub](#) also has some helpful resources available including;

- Managing your mental and physical wellbeing
- Managing your workspace
- Webinars and online resources
- Fitness for work Optima helpline
- Parents network
- Guides and resources

IT Support for working from home [can be found here](#)

Access to Work Mental Health Support Service – see the information at the end of this guide, or read more [here](#)

Network Rail Homeworking Workstation Self-Review questionnaire [can be found here](#), when prompted, use the region codes on the last page of this guide to complete the form.

Returning to the workplace



It is particularly important to consider adjustments when planning for employees to return to the workplace. It is vital to ask any employee with a long-term health condition or impairment (both physical or mental) if they foresee any barriers they may face on their return to the workplace.

In most cases, the disabled employee will have a great deal of knowledge about their impairment and the kind of adjustments that might help them to do their job. If further specialist advice is required, an occupational health referral can be made.



Useful links:

Network Rail's workplace recovery plans - [read more here](#)

Coronavirus Information Hub on MyConnect - [Coronavirus Information Hub](#)

Access to Work Mental Health Support Service – see the information at the end of this guide, or read more [here](#)

The [mental wellbeing hub](#) and the [welfare and wellbeing hub](#) also has some helpful resources available including;

- Managing your mental wellbeing
- Managing your physical wellbeing
- Managing your workspace
- Webinars and online resources
- Fitness for work Optima helpline
- Parents network
- NHS advice
- Guides and resources

Those who have continued in the workplace



For those people who have continued to work, either within operational or maintenance environments at Network Rail, there may still have been changes made which impact upon our disabled employees.

This could be, for example, social distancing measures taken within depots, sites and delivery units. Employees may also be using new technology to interact with managers and other employees who are working from home.

It's important to ask any employee with a long-term health condition or impairment (both physical and mental) if they foresee any barriers they may face with likely ongoing nature of social distancing, changes to the workplace and new ways of working.

In most cases, the disabled employee will have a great deal of knowledge about their impairment and the kind of adjustments that might help them to do their job. If further specialist advice is required, an occupational health referral can be made.



Useful links:

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Links to further general resources



Access to Work scheme

[Access to work Information](#)

CanDo

Our disabled employees' network 'CanDo' exists to provide peer support to disabled colleagues working within the business. Members can share experiences, signpost individuals to expert advice and raise issues of concern with the diversity and inclusion team. Get in touch via

CanDo@Networkrail.co.uk or see the yammer group [CanDo yammer](#)

Employee Assistance Programme

The service provided by **Validium** includes a confidential counselling and advice service to all employees and their immediate family members. They can provide information and answer questions on a wide range of issues such as stress, health and wellbeing, legal matters, pregnancy, landlords, neighbours, debt management, as well as counselling.

Available 24 Hours a day on 0800 358 4858.

Expert disability advice

Network Rail are members of **Business Disability Forum**, an external organisation that specialises in disability within a business context, including employment. Our managers can access free, confidential advice about any disability related issue from Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm.

020 7403 3020, or you can email your query to

advice@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Read&Write Assistive Technology

Full of helpful features like predictive text, text-to-speech, voice notes, research highlighting / source collection, and more, Read&Write can help save considerable time when completing daily tasks like report writing, emailing, and preparing presentations.

Read&Write can help everyone at work, not just those with literacy or communication challenges as Network Rail has an enterprise license meaning every employee can use this tool. Search the software catalogue for 'Read&Write' [Link to software catalogue](#).

Disability Matters Yammer group

A yammer page has been set up to support our work around Reasonable Adjustments and disability, this can be found here: [Disability Matters Yammer group](#)

Region Codes for Home-working Workstation self-review:

Region/Function	Code
Eastern	NR001
North-West & Central	NR002
Scotland's Railway	NR003
Southern *	NR004
Wales & Western	NR005
Network Services	NR006
Route Services	NR007
CEO Chief of Staff Office	NR008
Chief Financial Officer Directorate	NR009
Communications	NR010
Human Resources	NR011
STE/Technical Authority	NR012
System Operator	NR013
Transformation	NR014