

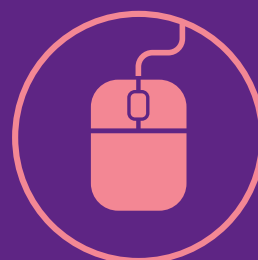


sense

connecting sight, sound and life

I want to work!

An employment guide for people
with sensory impairments



Steven Morris



Steven, aged 34, is blind and has cochlear implants, and works as a technology adviser for a national charity.

“After I left university I worked for the Welsh government for a number of years. I always used to say to them from day one ‘don’t be afraid to ask me any questions,’ and that worked and put people at ease I think. They were very good in supporting me and I think that leads to pretty loyal employees.

Gradually though my hearing was deteriorating and it got to the point where it wasn’t really sustainable any more. So I left to have cochlear implants fitted and they have made a huge difference to my life.

I found that volunteering was a great way of getting back into the workplace, getting some skills and building up my confidence. It’s potentially a really positive option for someone who’s maybe not been in the workplace for a long time, or because of a disability has struggled maybe after college or school to find employment.

After I had volunteered for a national charity for a number of months they offered me a paid position as a Technology Officer and I now work three days a week – with some support from Access to Work. My role is to provide information and guidance about technology for people with disabilities and to encourage them to use it.

My favourite bits are when we get somebody contacting us with an enquiry and I can find some sort of solution, so I’m making somebody’s life that little bit better, that little bit easier.

I think that wherever possible people with disabilities should be offered support to work. Because it’s not just about earning money, although obviously that’s important, it’s about wellbeing and self-respect. You pay your taxes and you’re part of society.”

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Introduction

Working can be a rewarding experience and a great way to contribute your skills, experience and knowledge towards something you are interested in. As a person with sensory impairments, you may be worried about the steps you need to take to apply for a job – and what you can expect once you start working.

However, there is lots of support at hand – and this guide aims to point you in the right direction to finding a job that suits you.

Working isn't just about what you can offer an employer – it's also about what your employer can offer you. Finding the right support is essential to creating an inclusive workplace that has the best people in the right roles – which will ultimately benefit businesses and customers. The invaluable contribution you can make should be recognised and rewarded, and you should be supported in work to do the things best suited to your skills and development.

Lastly, it's important that, above all, you do something you enjoy. Though the main focus in this guide is on traditional employment avenues and support, this isn't the only way you can learn and develop. You can also find information in this guide about volunteering and other ways to be involved in your community that may appeal to you more.

What help can you expect from employers?

Your legal rights

The Equality Act

If you have sensory impairments, including blindness, deafness or deafblindness, then you are legally protected against discrimination by the Equality Act 2010.

This Act replaces previous anti-discrimination laws, including the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act. You are protected because you have protected characteristics' which include, but are not limited to;

- Disability
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Ethnicity, and
- Religion.

The Equality Act also protects people associated with those with 'protected characteristics' against discrimination – for instance friends and relatives of someone who is deafblind.

Types of discrimination

Discrimination can take different forms:

- **Direct discrimination** is when someone is treated worse because of their sensory impairments and this is deliberate.
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs, for example, where general services, provisions, practices, rules and policies are worse for people with sensory impairments but this is not deliberate.
- **Harassment** is where a person with sensory impairments is subjected to offensive and intimidating behaviour because of their impairments.
- **Victimisation** is when a person is treated badly because they have complained about being discriminated against, or are being harassed because of their sensory impairments.

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“If you have sensory impairments you are legally protected against discrimination by the Equality Act 2010.”



Why the Equality Act is important

The Equality Act legally protects you from discrimination and disadvantage in work due to your disability.

This means that employers cannot discriminate against someone with sensory impairments:

- **In the application and recruitment process:** The Act provides protection against unfair treatment in job application forms and tests, organising and attending job interviews, being offered the job and the terms, conditions and types of employment.
- **When someone is in work:** The Act offers protection in terms of the training and promotion opportunities that someone is offered.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act also requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people are not treated worse in employment. It recognises that some disabled people may need extra support and help so they can work on an equal basis with non-disabled people.

Employers are legally required to make reasonable adjustments to the application or recruitment process as well as within the workplace. This means that they have a duty to make changes and adaptations to remove any barriers you may face so that you can apply for jobs and work. It is about ensuring you have the same access to a job as any other employee.

Many reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and relatively straightforward to make. However, disabled people should never be asked to pay for the costs of reasonable adjustments. It is the employer's responsibility to finance the adjustments needed. If an employer needs support they can apply to Access to Work for government funding (see information about Access to Work on page 12).

The type of reasonable adjustment that will be required will depend on each individual with sensory impairments. What is reasonable will also depend upon various factors such as:

- The individual's support needs;
- How practical the adjustments are; and
- The size, resources and finances of an organisation or employer.



There are generally three different types of reasonable adjustments employers may make so that you can apply for a job and do the job itself on an equal basis.

1 Providing extra aids or support

Employers may provide:

- Sign language interpreters
- Communication support
- A support worker to assist where needed
- Information in accessible alternative formats such as large print (including changes in font style and colours), electronic, braille and audio
- Specialist equipment and technology relevant to your job
- A portable hearing loop system for use with hearing aids

More expensive adjustments, such as screen reader software, electronic magnifiers, and payment for a support worker can be funded by Access to Work. For more details about Access to Work see page 12.

It is important that you discuss reasonable adjustments with your employer if they are something you will need throughout the job application process, or once you start work. You do not have to declare your disability, but if you choose to, your employer must legally recognise your right to reasonable adjustments. This means you can also have discussions with an employer about reasonable adjustments as early as the application stage.

TIP 1: If your employer is unfamiliar with reasonable adjustments, they may wish to look at Sense's guide for employing people with sensory impairments at: www.sense.org.uk/employmentguide.

It is also important to try to be as clear and precise as possible about what adjustments you need and why you need these. This will help you receive the right reasonable adjustments to suit your sensory impairments and the requirements of the job.

TIP 2: If you are offered a job, your reasonable adjustments needs may change as you take on more responsibility in the role. You may also not know all the adjustments you will need before you start your job. Therefore it's important that your employer is aware that you may need to have ongoing discussions about the reasonable adjustments you may require. This is highlighted in Sense's employer guide.

TIP 3: If you are offered a job and the organisation doesn't arrange a meeting to discuss your reasonable adjustments, it may be a good idea to suggest this discussion takes place four to six weeks before you start. In this meeting you can ask to go through the different tasks you would be expected to carry out in the role and the adjustments you may need to complete them.

TIP 4: When discussing reasonable adjustments with an employer, remember that they enable you to work to the same high standard an employer expects of every employee. They are effectively a return on investment as both you and your employer benefit from them.

2 Change the way things are done in the workplace

Employers may have certain ways of doing things, which disadvantage you as a person with sensory impairments.

This could be a formal or informal policy, rule, work practice or procedure that disadvantages you. For example, it may usually be expected that employees arrive at work for nine and leave at five, when public transport is at its most crowded. But it may be necessary for you to travel and work at different times – for example, starting and finishing early.

Employers have a duty to make changes and reasonable adjustments to policies and practices for you. These might include:

- Flexible working hours
- Working part time
- Working reduced hours
- Having rest breaks
- Shift sharing
- Having extra time to complete work tasks and assessments
- Working from home.

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 “It may be necessary for you to travel and work at different times – for example, starting and finishing early.”

3 Physical changes to the workplace

It might be a physical feature of the workplace building, office or environment that makes it difficult for you to work – and employers can make physical and structural adjustments to the workplace in these cases. For example:

- Having more or less lighting so that it is easier to see, including for people who lip-read
- Having clearer signs
- Making sure that pathways and corridors are clearly shown
- Moving furniture to make the workplace easier to navigate for someone with a visual impairment

People’s experiences of reasonable adjustments

On the next pages you can read about some examples of people who asked for different reasonable adjustments when applying for, and in, work.



Jo-Ann

her experience of successfully applying for a number of jobs.

Jo-Ann has Usher Syndrome type 2, which means she has severe sight impairment and severe to profound hearing impairment¹. She works full time as a Senior Executive Officer, leading on the organisation's Induction Programme and Diversity. She is also the disability champion for the business area, which involves working with disabled staff and the business to make sure the workplace is inclusive for all.

Jo-Ann has been in full time employment since she was sixteen and has worked her way up to the senior level position she is in today. She has taken on different roles in her career, sometimes having to change direction when her sight and hearing have deteriorated.

This has meant that she has applied for a number of positions with her employer. When she applies, Jo-Ann declares her disability on the application form and explains what reasonable adjustments she would need for the interview, including: good lighting, face-to-face communication, a hearing loop, and to avoid having the interview panel seated with their back to the window.

When she has been successful in her application, Jo-Ann also explains to her managers what equipment she will need to be effective in her role. She explains these adjustments in a positive way, because they mean she will be able to perform well in her role. **“In other words, a ‘return**

on investment’ will be gained from doing so,” she says, “not just for me as a disabled employee, but what the business will get by enabling me to do my job to a high standard”.

The reasonable adjustments she has requested have included working at home for some of the time (such as when she is experiencing fatigue), and travelling to work when it is light or when it is quieter.

Jo-Ann has equipment to help her do her job including:

- Magnification software for her computer screen, with white on black colour contrast and increased font size;
- A bigger mouse which makes it easier for her to navigate the screen;
- Notepads of coloured paper and berol pens as she struggles with white paper;
- A natural daylight lamp that helps her to manage changes in lighting; and
- A portable hearing loop for use in meetings.

She says, “I place emphasis on what I can do, not dwell on what I can’t. I think, through positive behaviour, you can break down a lot of barriers. Yes, some take longer than others, but you will get there eventually”.

¹ More information on Usher Type 2 Syndrome can be found here: www.sense.org.uk/content/different-types-usher-syndrome

Daisy

her experience of applying for a graduate scheme.

Daisy is severely sight impaired and has a severe to profound hearing impairment. When applying for a graduate scheme application process and assessment centre, she had to ask for reasonable adjustments.

While the online application was accessible with the use of magnification software, timed online tests were part of the application, and Daisy requested 100% extra time for this. The employer was also happy to provide information about the layout and structure of the tests.

Before attending the assessment centre Daisy clearly explained by email the reasonable adjustments she would need. **She says, “I think it is really important to tell employers about my disability and what adjustments I need, as that way I have an equal opportunity as others to perform well in an application.”**

The activities at the assessment centre involved group sessions, written tests, and an interview. The employer was great at making the adjustments Daisy needed and all the assessors were briefed so that they were aware of her sensory impairments.

For each group activity, Daisy asked that her group move to a separate room where there was less background noise so that she could hear the others in the group. For larger group activities and discussions, Daisy’s personal assistant (who attended as her sighted guide and support) was able to help by repeating things that Daisy hadn’t heard.

For the written tests she was able to use her own laptop, with magnification and white on black colours as she cannot see handwriting. She also had 100% extra time to complete these tests. For the interview, Daisy explained she needed face-to-face communication with clear speech and good lighting, which was arranged.

.....
“I think it is really important to tell employers about my disability and what adjustments I need.”



Gary

requesting changes in the workplace



Gary has Usher Syndrome, a genetic condition that affects vision and hearing. He works for a sensory impairment charity for twenty-eight hours a week supporting teams in the fundraising department. Gary had reasonable adjustments for the application process and within the workplace.

The application form was available online as an accessible Word document, which suited Gary's needs so no adjustments were required. For the interview, Gary requested for information and hand-outs to be emailed to him. During the interview he asked not be positioned facing the window and was interviewed in a room without windows.

When Gary was successful at the interview stage, he discussed the changes he might need in the workplace with his employer. As a

result, physical changes were made to reduce the amount of glare by removing the strip lighting around his desk area (above, next to and ahead of his desk). He also has tall screens surrounding the back and sides of his desk.

Gary also had an assessment from Access to Work (see page 13) and received equipment to help him do his job:

- A key board with more visible keys (white lettering on black);
- An adjustable table screen;
- Hearing technology for use with hearing aids to access phone calls; and
- A wide/touch screen monitor (this equipment however was not useful as it was too reflective).

Disability-friendly organisations

As a starting point, you may want to look at employers that aim to be disability-friendly.

The Business Disability Forum (BDF) is a not-for-profit member organisation that works with businesses to employ disabled people. Businesses pay a membership fee to access support, advice and guidance. You can download a list of their members here: www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership/become-a-member.

You can also find out more about what the BDF does here: www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/about-us.

The **Government's Disability Confident** scheme aims to promote disability-friendly working cultures by encouraging businesses to voluntarily sign up to the scheme. This allows them to access free resources, advice and guidance.

Employers are identified as being on one of three levels, depending on their performance. An employer does not have to achieve everything set out in the criteria for one level,

but should be working towards implementing those changes in their business.

For example, to achieve the following levels employers should be:

- **Level one:** ensuring recruitment processes are inclusive and accessible; anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required; offering work experience or work trials; providing job shadowing opportunities.
- **Level two:** actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people; flexibility when assessing people so that disabled job applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job; ensuring there are no barriers to the development and progression of disabled staff.
- **Level three:** encouraging other employers to become Disability Confident.

For more information on the Disability Confident scheme visit: www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme



What support is available for jobseekers with sensory impairments?

Access to Work

Access to Work (AtW) is a Government funded scheme that was set up to enable disabled people in work to get additional support beyond the reasonable adjustments that employers are required to make (see page 5 for information on reasonable adjustments).

If you have sensory impairments, AtW can help pay for support including:

- Taxis to and from work;
- Support workers; and
- Specialist computer software.

The funding is provided as a grant which you don't have to pay back. It also won't affect any benefits you may be receiving.

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“You can also receive support for a job interview, such as communicator support.”

Can I claim Access to Work?

To get support from AtW, your sensory impairments must affect your ability to work, or mean you need extra support to do your job. Your impairments must have lasted for more than one year, or be likely to last for more than one year.

You must also be either working or starting a work trial. This covers full time or part time work, permanent or temporary work, and there is no minimum number of hours you need to work to apply.

You can apply for AtW if you have started working for the first time, or if you are already working, and have either acquired sensory impairments or have only just become aware of the scheme.

You can also receive support for a job interview, such as communicator support. To be able to apply, you may need to provide evidence you have a job interview or a job start date.



How do I apply for Access to Work?

You can apply through your local Jobcentre Plus, or directly through AtW.

There are a number of ways to apply directly:

- Online at **www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply**
- Email **atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk**
- Call: 0345 2688 489
- Textphone: 0345 6088 753
- British Sign Language (BSL) video relay service (more information can be found on the AtW website at the link given)

Alternative formats such as braille, large print or audio CD are also available and can be requested using the above channels.

If the communication methods described above are unsuitable for your needs, you can write to AtW at the address below and tell them the most appropriate method of communication for you:

Access to Work
 Operational Support Unit
 Harrow Jobcentre Plus
 Mail Handling Site A
 Wolverhampton
 WV98 1JE

When you contact AtW, they will need personal information from you to start your application. This should never be sent by email.

What to expect when you apply

AtW will determine the support you need by talking to you and your employer about what you may need to do your job.

You and your employer may decide it is best for your employer to make initial contact with AtW. While this is acceptable, AtW will usually still need to talk to you, so it is best you are present when your employer makes initial contact if possible. AtW are likely to discuss your role with you, your disability, and the impact it will have on your role.

After an initial discussion, AtW may arrange a workplace assessment to establish the best support that should be made available to you. This will look at your workplace and the adjustments, aids and appliances you may need for your role.

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 “It is important that you are clear about the tasks you are required to do in your role.”

² Speech-To-Text reporters, also known as palantypists, listen to what is being said and type the words onto a keyboard. This can be related either to a screen or electronic braille reader to be read by the individual(s) needing it.

Typically, AtW provides support for:

- Communication, including in work and at the interview stage. This can involve organising a BSL interpreter or a Speech-To-Text Reporter²;
- Aids and equipment, such as adjustments needed to computer software or workplace environments;
- Travel, both in work and to/from work. This can include funding for taxis and communicator guides.

TIP 1: AtW does not guarantee they will provide a specialist adviser so it is possible that you will be assessed by someone who is unfamiliar with sensory impairments. It is important that you are clear about the tasks you are required to do in your role, what support you need for these, and what would happen if you did not have this support.

TIP 2: Remember that your needs, and the adjustments you require, may change if you have new job responsibilities or your disability changes – and it is important to discuss this regularly with your manager and HR. If your employer doesn't bring this up, you can give them Sense's employer guide which helps explain this: www.sense.org.uk/employmentguide.

TIP 3: The time taken for AtW to put support in place can vary, so you should discuss any support you will need in the meantime with your manager and HR team. If you feel this is taking too long, please see details on how to complain on page 15.

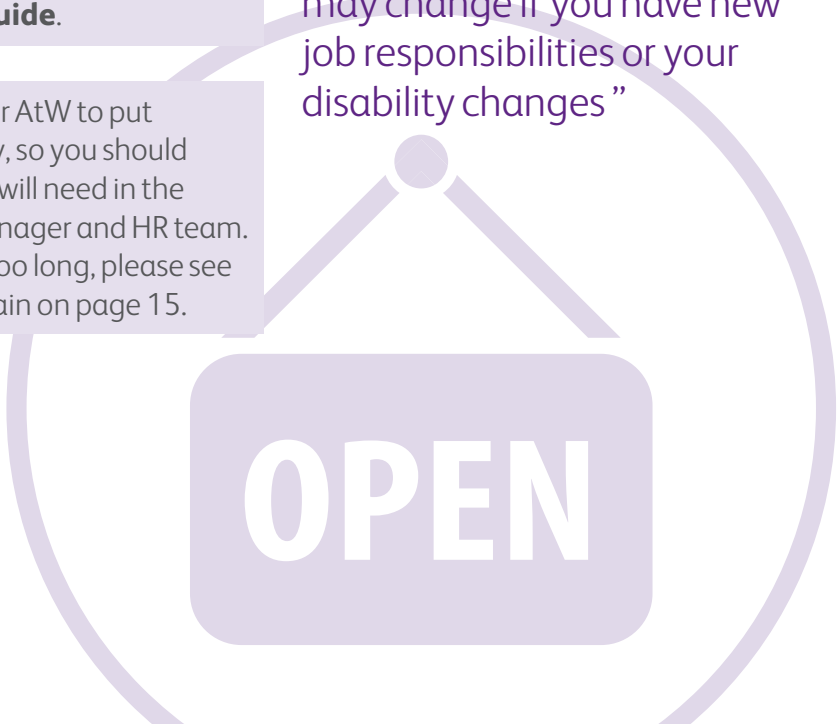
Once a workplace assessment has taken place, the assessor will send a written report to AtW which includes their recommendations of the support you will need. A copy will be sent to you so that you can check for inaccuracies. You should highlight any changes you would like to be made to the report.

Once the report has been submitted, AtW will assess the claim and outline the support you are entitled to in an award letter. If you are unhappy with your award, you are entitled to have it reconsidered by a different AtW adviser.

You are only able to request a reconsideration once. To arrange this, use the contact details on the top of your award letter or you can send an email to: northeast.atw@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

When you are happy with your AtW award, you may want to discuss both the report and the award letter with your line manager and Human Resources (HR) to go through the suggested adjustments, and to provide clarity on your support needs.

.....
“Remember that your needs, and the adjustments you require, may change if you have new job responsibilities or your disability changes”



Things to be aware of:

- **If you are unhappy with any aspect of your AtW claim**, you can make a complaint. For example, you might complain if your claim is taking too long, or if you feel an assessor was rude to you. This is different to asking for your AtW award to be reconsidered. You can complain by contacting AtW, or emailing their complaints team directly at **atw.complaintsresolutionteam@dpw.gsi.gov.uk**.
- **If you are self-employed or are considering self-employment**, AtW cannot be used to cover business start-up costs. You can apply for support once your business is up and running. For more information on self-employment, see page 19.
- **How much you will receive from AtW** will depend on your circumstances. From April 2017 there is a cap of £42,100 worth of support per person, per year. This may impact you if you need communication support, such as BSL interpreters.

Supported employment

Some organisations work with employers to support people who have more complex disabilities to work. The organisation will work with an individual to understand what a good job match may be for them, how to engage and support employers, and what in-work support would be needed for a role.

In the UK, the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) is the main source of supported employment. They run programmes and work with employers to offer tailored and specialised roles.



Their website includes lots of information on supported employment and work generally. You can also see which organisations work with BASE and search for local services in your area: **www.base-uk.org**.

They also have a knowledge base, which offers a variety of resources that are useful for both jobseekers and employers: **www.base-uk.org/knowledge-base**.

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“Some organisations work with employers to support people who have more complex disabilities to work.”

Halima

the benefits of supported employment at Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a supported internship programme for young people with learning disabilities and/ or those on the autistic spectrum. It is a unique, business-led, one year school-to-work programme that takes place entirely in the workplace.

In this programme, the individual becomes completely involved in the workplace, with a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through taking on different roles.

Halima is visually impaired and has learning difficulties and joined Project SEARCH in the last year of her formal education. At the time, she lacked self-confidence and needed support with the simplest of tasks. Halima also had little understanding of the work environment and what it might involve. During the programme Halima tried a range of roles and tasks. This included administrative work, such as opening the post and booking in appointments, greeting visitors, directing patients to where they needed to be, and helping to feed, talk to and reassure patients.

Halima is fluent in Urdu and was able to help patients communicate their needs and concerns to nurses and doctors. Halima's caring attitude and ability to listen were greatly valued by patients and staff, and as a result she was given a Barts Health Hero award. The main objective of Halima's Project SEARCH support team was to help her to learn how to do tasks independently, breaking them down into smaller elements and enabling her to master these one by one.

As she grew in confidence, the support was gradually withdrawn. Halima also received travel support and long cane training, which enabled her to travel to work alone and navigate around the hospital. By trying a range of roles that required different skills Halima realised that she was passionate about becoming a housekeeper on the ward. She shadowed an experienced housekeeper to learn how to do the job, and when a position became available she successfully applied for the job. She says:

“I have just started my job as a housekeeper on a ward. I like that I was able to go and work on different wards and learn different skills, but the most important thing the project did for me is it got me a job. I can now earn money. I already made some friends on the ward. I always wanted to have a job and now my dream came true.”





Jobcentre Plus

Your local Jobcentre Plus should have Health and Disability Advisors (formerly known as Disability Employment Advisors) that can support you to find a job. They should help with job searching and applications, including writing CVs, cover letters and preparing for interviews. They should also be able to signpost you to local support in your area, including disability friendly employers.

There are employment programmes available through Jobcentre Plus. At the moment, disabled people looking for work support can access Work Choice or the Work Programme. These will combine in 2017 to become the Work and Health Programme. Health and Disability Advisors should be able to explain what support is available and whether it will be suitable for you.

Currently, Work Choice is the programme designed to help support disabled people into work. More information on the programme can be found here: www.gov.uk/work-choice.

The Work Programme is also designed to support people into, or to remain in, work though it is not specifically designed for disabled people. More information about the Work Programme can be found here: www.gov.uk/moving-from-benefits-to-work/job-search-programmes.

You can contact your local Jobcentre Plus to make an appointment with a Health and Disability Advisor using the information provided here: www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus.



Employment support programmes and resources

There are a range of employment support programmes and resources from different organisations which you may be eligible to receive support from. This varies from graduate and job entry-level support, to support for progressing in your career.

For graduates/young people

EmployAbility

EmployAbility work with disabled graduates and university students to support their transition from education into employment. This includes help with CVs, job applications, interview preparation, finding disability-friendly employers, advice on how to disclose your disability, and specialist recruitment events. They also offer graduate and internship programmes for disabled students.

As a jobseeker with a disability, you will not be charged for the services provided by EmployAbility. To find out more about how they can support you visit: www.employability.org.uk/students/services.

Change 100: Leonard Cheshire Disability

Change 100 is a programme for disabled graduates and students which offers three month paid internships across a range of employers – including the BBC, Department for International Development (DFID), Experian, Lloyds Banking Group, and Thomas Reuters. Many students from the scheme go on to continue work or into further education. Find out more at: www.leonardcheshire.org/what-we-do/work-and-skills-development/change100.

Scope – Future Ambitions Employment Service

Scope's employment programme aims to support young disabled people, from the age of sixteen to twenty-five, into sustainable employment. Currently, the scheme operates in London, in Hackney, Islington, Newham, and Tower Hamlets. Find out more at: www.scope.org.uk/futureambitions.

Milkround

Milkround is a recruitment website that advertises a number of entry-level jobs and graduate schemes. It's a good place to start looking for a job, and you can research the different employers to check their disability policies and initiatives (see the section on how to find a disability-friendly organisation on page 11). Visit: www.milkround.com.

Recruitment focused support

Evenbreak

Evenbreak matches disabled people seeking work with employers that are serious about employing disabled people. As well as offering support for both jobseekers and employers, they offer a host of resources on their website for completing job applications and preparing for interviews: www.evenbreak.co.uk.

DiversityJobs.co.uk

DiversityJobs is a website that only advertises vacancies from employers who understand the value of building a diverse workforce. See their job postings at: www.diversityjobs.co.uk.

Career Progression

The Leadership Academy Programme from Disability Rights UK

The Leadership Academy Programme is specifically designed for junior or middle level managers with a disability that are looking to progress in their careers. The programme includes working in a group on a particular project and then presenting the project. The design of the programme ensures leadership skills are prioritised throughout. Find out more at: www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/leadership.



Sensory impairment specific support

Action for Blind People/ RNIB employment services

Action for Blind People and RNIB work together to provide specialist employment support for people with a visual impairment. They have specialist services and a wealth of resources to help with every stage of your career. To find out more information, including how to find services local to you, visit: www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living/work-and-employment.

Visionary

Visionary is a charity that works to link together local sight impairment charities. You can visit their website to find local charities near you that may run specialist employment support programmes: www.visionary.org.uk.

Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD)

RAD run specialist employment support services for people who are d/Deaf. You can find more information about what they provide at: www.royaldeaf.org.uk/services-partners/employment.

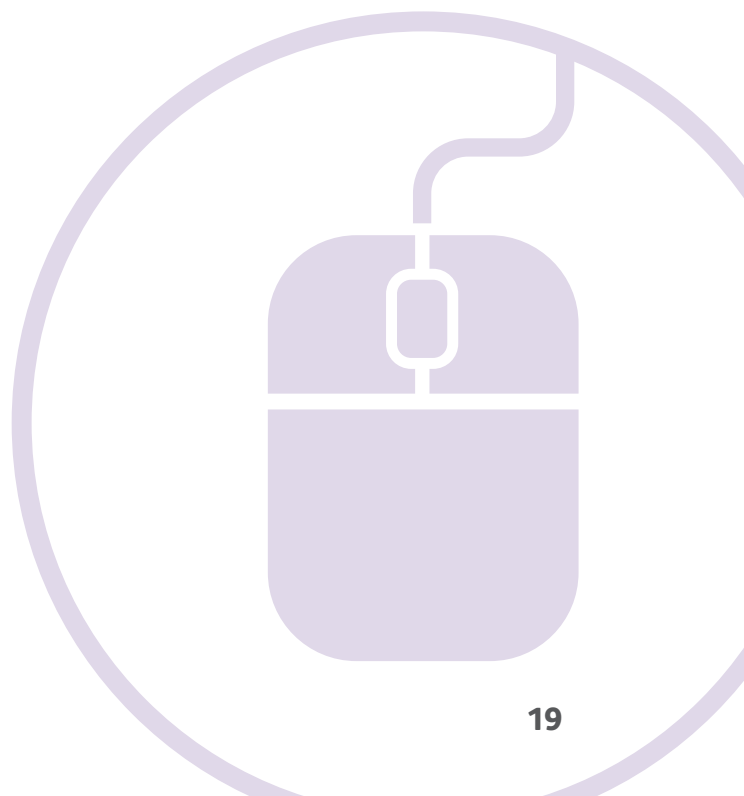
General disability support

Scope Employment Support

Scope offers employment programmes for working age disabled people. The support offered includes job-matching, pre-interview preparation and in-work support: www.scope.org.uk/support/services/employment.

Your Local Authority

A number of organisations run employment support in local areas, so it is worth contacting your local authority or local organisations to check what may be available. Jobcentre Plus should also be able to help you with searching for opportunities in your area (please see page 17 for more information on Jobcentre Plus).



Support for self-employment

Self-employment may also be an option you are considering. There are many reasons why someone chooses to be self-employed, including increased flexibility over your working hours and environment, and pursuing a business idea.

As an employment option it can be rewarding and exciting, but it also often requires a lot of work and perseverance.

Setting up your own business can be daunting – although there is support available for funding and planning if you are eligible:

Support for getting started

If you are thinking of starting a new business there are all sorts of resources that offer advice on key aspects – such as how to write a business plan and offering legal advice.

The **Association of Disabled Professionals** is a charity that aims to improve the educational and employment opportunities of disabled people. They provide useful resources on their website, www.adp.org.uk, and have recently launched a plain English resource guide and directory of support. You can request a copy by emailing info@adp.org.uk.

The **British Library's Business and IP Centre** has a wealth of resources available for anyone looking to start their own business, including guides on starting from scratch and how to promote your business across social media: www.bl.uk/business-and-ip-centre/start-your-business.

The **Government's website** offers advice for setting up and starting your own business: www.gov.uk/browse/business.

The **Blind Business Associate Charitable Trust** provides advice and guidance for people who are blind or partially sighted who want to start up their business. You can also apply for grants: www.bbact.org.uk.

Getting financial support

The Government's **New Enterprise Allowance** offers money and support for starting a business. To qualify, you or your partner must receive one of the following:

- Jobseekers Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support.
- You may be eligible if you get Universal Credit.

You can also attend workshops if you are thinking of becoming self-employed, receive mentoring support, and apply for a start-up loan.

You can access the Allowance through a work coach at Jobcentre Plus. More information on this can be found at: www.gov.uk/new-enterprise-allowance.

The **Princes Trust Young Enterprise Programme** offers training, funding and mentoring support to eighteen to thirty year olds to bring their business ideas to life. Further information can be accessed at: www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/who-else/business-advice.

The website also includes a large list of organisations that offer grants to those starting up their own businesses, which you can find at: www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/who-else/employment/grants-funding.

The disability charity, **Leonard Cheshire**, run the **Stelios Award for Disabled People in the UK**, sponsored by Stelios Haji-Ioannou, the founder of EasyJet. The annual award offers cash prizes for entrepreneurial business ideas – both from established businesses as well as those in the planning stage. Find out more at: www.leonardcheshire.org/support-and-information/life-and-work-skills-development/employment-programmes/stelios-award-for.

The **Oli Bennett Charitable Trust** offers grants for young people, aged between eighteen and thirty, to get their business ideas off the ground and build into sustainable and profitable ventures. The Trust will only offer a grant based on a business plan. More information at: www.olibennett.com/guidance-for-applicants.

Your **local authority** may work with local small businesses as part of the **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** initiative launched by the Government in 2010. It is worth getting in touch with your local authority as they may offer grants, funding opportunities and general advice. You can find more information on LEPs at: www.lepnetwork.net.



Networking support

Networking and making business contacts is very important if you are looking to become self-employed or start up your own business. However, it can be difficult to know where to start, especially if you have sensory impairments and need adjustments to take part in networking events that will benefit your business.

Disabled Entrepreneurs UK provides opportunities for networking for disabled people, and they also offer grants: www.disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk.

Support if you are already running your own business

The Government's **Access to Work** scheme provides grants to help disabled people to start and remain in work. The scheme cannot be used for start-up costs for those who are looking to start their own business, or to cover costs while the business is being formed. For example, it cannot be used to fund skills courses, buy standard equipment for the business or for conducting research.

If you have established a business, you can apply to get support for your role in the business. More details of the scheme, the type of support available, and how to apply can be found on page 12.

Mentoring

Mentors me is an online gateway where businesses can seek mentoring at any stage, whether that is start-up, growth, when established or succession planning. You can search for mentors in your region and they also have a number of resources for mentoring: www.mentorsme.co.uk.

What to expect when applying for a job

Application processes

Different job roles will have different requirements for applying. Some jobs ask for candidates to submit their Curriculum Vitae (CV), others require both a CV and a letter explaining why you want the job, and some may require you to fill in an application form asking specific questions.

These will help employers to judge if you have the skills they are looking for and are the right person for the job.

Employers usually check CVs, covering letters and applications against the criteria for the job. This is usually a list of skills they would like the job candidate to demonstrate and can be found along with the job application or advertisement. If you can't find this for a job you would like to apply for, you can always ask the employer what skills they are looking for.

Important things to remember...

Under the reasonable adjustments section of the Equality Act (2010), employers are required to make adjustments in their application processes if you declare your disability. This means that if you need any adjustments to the above processes, including submitting your CV or letter, you can contact the employer and explain.

You are under no obligation to declare your disability at any stage of the application process – you do not need to declare it on your CV or at the interview. However, if you require adjustments at any stage, declaring your disability can help you to secure these adjustments, and can also help an employer understand that you are able to perform in a role with the right support.

Disability Rights UK offers a helpful factsheet about declaring your disability that may help you decide if this is the right step

for you when applying for a job: **[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-you're-disabled-clear-and-easy-guide-students](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-you-re-disabled-clear-and-easy-guide-students)**.

It is good practice for an employer to offer an interview when a candidate meets the minimum criteria set out in a job description. Some employers guarantee an interview if the candidate meets the minimum criteria. Other adjustments can be made during the interview process to help you - see the reasonable adjustments section on page 5 for more information on what this means for you and for employers.

You may also find it useful to refer employers to Sense's guide which gives an overview of reasonable adjustments for employers: **www.sense.org.uk/content/employment**.

CV

A CV introduces you to an employer, and includes important information such as your education and employment history.

There is no single ‘correct’ way to write a CV, but there are certain things that most people stick to. It should usually:

- Be no longer than two sides of A4 paper;
- Include your name and ways of contacting you e.g. email, telephone number, address, etc.;
- Give details of your work and education history; and
- Provide an outline of your skills and interests.

Typically, people choose one of two ways to present information. If you have a history of work experience, you may want to present your CV as a timeline, so the employer can see how you have progressed at work. See page 30 for an example.

Alternatively, a CV can present the different skills you can offer to an employer. This type of CV can be easily tailored to suit the job description of a job you are applying for, and is also useful if you are considering changing the direction of your career. See page 32 for an example.

.....
“A CV can present the different skills you can offer to an employer.”

Covering letter

Employers will sometimes ask for a covering letter with your CV. You may want to consider sending a covering letter along with your CV even if the application does not ask for one.

A covering letter is an opportunity to expand on the information in your CV, and demonstrate how your skills apply to the job criteria. It is also a chance for you to say why you want the job – for example, this may be because of the job itself and the skills you will gain, or because you are interested in the organisation and want to contribute to its work.

Ideally, a covering letter should be one A4 side of paper, or two at the very most. You could structure the letter like this:

- Introduce yourself and your reason for applying for the job
- Give the reasons why you would like to work for the organisation – you can also show how much you know about the organisation here if you have researched it
- Give more detail on your experience outlined in your CV and how it is relevant to the job criteria. Keep this succinct – it is about providing interesting information and presenting yourself in a way that will encourage the employer to call you back for an interview.

Application forms

Some employers will ask candidates to fill out an application form. The main aim of this is to show you have the right skills for the job and the organisation. Demonstrating this effectively will increase the likelihood that you will be called for an interview.

Application forms are likely to include questions that ask you to provide examples of when you have demonstrated a skill the job requires. For example, if applying for a research job, you could be asked to describe a time that you have had to prioritise different pieces of work, or present your work to different audiences.

Application forms are usually lengthy and time consuming so it is recommended you only complete them for a job you are interested in and which matches your skills.

TIP 1: Under the Equality Act (2010), employers are required to make application forms accessible. If you declare your disability, an employer should ask if you need the form in an alternative format, or if they can provide a reasonable adjustment, such as allowing you to go through the form verbally.

TIP 2: Application forms often include equality and diversity forms where you may be asked if you have a disability. If you wish to declare your disability, particularly for adjustments at the interview stage, including some details on this form is one way to do so.

Online tests

Some employers may ask you to complete online tests as part of your application. These can include maths, verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning tests. They are usually part of the process when applying for a graduate scheme after university.

In verbal reasoning tests you will usually be presented with some text that includes information and you will be asked questions to check that you have understood the content, and are able to make logical conclusions using the information presented.

Non-verbal reasoning tests usually present a series of pictures or shapes, and ask you to pick the next picture or shape for the sequence. They test visual reasoning.

TIP 3: If any tests are presented in an inaccessible format, an employer is required, if you have declared your disability, to provide the tests in an alternative format, or to provide a different way of testing these skills that suits you. You can also ask for more time for these tests as a reasonable adjustment, particularly if you are using technology such as screen reading software to access them. See case study two, Daisy, on page 9 as an example.

Interviews

The interview stage is a chance for an employer to get to know more about you. This is also your chance to find out more about the job and the organisation, to get an idea of whether you would like to work there.

Reasonable adjustments should also be made at this stage if you require them.

Preparing for the interview

To prepare before the interview, look over your application form or CV. You may be asked a range of questions at the interview, which could include you being asked to expand on something from your CV or an answer you've written in the application form.

It is always a good idea to research the organisation you are applying to. Demonstrating knowledge of the organisation gives a positive impression and shows you are genuinely interested in working there.

Preparing answers to likely questions will also help you feel confident in the interview. Here are some common questions that come up in interviews:

- Tell us about yourself

It may be helpful to think of this question as an ice-breaker in an interview; you can talk a bit about your work and education history, or your hobbies and interests that may be relevant to the job or organisation.

- What would you contribute to the role?

Think about the skills you can offer and how you can bring a unique skill or perspective to the role. Experiences from volunteering or work may be good examples of how you can bring a wider perspective.

.....
“Think about the skills you can offer and how you can bring a unique skill or perspective to the role.”



- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

This is a common question that some people find difficult to answer. Your strengths can include things you enjoy doing and have done well in. When asking about your weaknesses, an employer is often trying to gauge your self-awareness – so describing an area that you are working to improve in is a good approach. For example, you may say you dislike presenting, but have taken a training course or have put yourself forward to give presentations so that you are more comfortable with the experience. You could also mention any hobbies you have that help you develop these skills – such as taking part in performing arts.

- Can you give an example of a challenge you faced and how you overcame it?

You are likely to get questions like these in an interview. This is about asking you to describe a situation and how you responded to it. A good way to structure an answer to questions like this is by using the STAR approach:

Situation: start off by setting the scene and the context for the example you are describing – such as the project you were working on, who you were working with, and what you were trying to achieve.

Task: you should then focus on your exact role in the project, rather than that of the team. Give some detail about your role while keeping it fairly brief.

Action: this is the most important part of your answer where you should describe what you did to achieve your goal. You should focus on what you did, how you did it and why you decided to take the approach you did.

Result: choose an example that has a positive result with a specific outcome that you can describe – for example, helping an unhappy customer which meant s/he continues to use the company.

Be prepared to also answer questions about any gaps in your employment and education history. If these are disability related, it may be helpful to declare your disability before the interview. Employers are not permitted to ask you questions about your disability in an interview, unless it is to offer adjustments.

Asking questions

When you are being interviewed it is important that you ask questions to make sure you would be happy working there – and that the employer would benefit from the skills you have.

You may want to get a clearer idea of what the job would involve – such as asking for a more detailed description of the day-to-day responsibilities, or asking what the most important skills are to do well. You could also ask about training opportunities and personal development – such as whether you would be able to attend courses or gain on-the-job experience if there are particular skills you want to develop.

It is also a good idea to ask about the direction the company or department is taking - such as the biggest opportunities and challenges it is facing at the moment. Asking about the culture of the organisation can also give you an idea of what it would be like working there – for example, if they prioritise the learning and development of their employees, it is likely there will opportunities for training and career progression. If you have chosen to declare your disability, you could also ask about whether there are initiatives that may be useful for you to be aware of – for example, some organisations have disability networks and groups for employees.

.....
“It is important that you ask questions to make sure you would be happy working there.”

Other ways to build skills and experience



Volunteering

Volunteering can be a great way to build and develop skills in a supportive and interesting environment. As you are freely offering your time and skills, you can probably be more flexible about the hours you work and choose work that offers you the best learning opportunities. It is also a good way of testing different working environments to find out if a type of employment is right for you.

There are different ways to get involved in volunteering. The following are some things you might want to consider before exploring your options.

What do you hope to get from volunteering?

Volunteering can be a way to build your skills for a future job or career, or to pursue something you're interested in – even if you are not considering working in that area.

It's important you think about what you hope to get out of volunteering and what skills and experiences you might like to gain. For example, you may want to look at volunteering opportunities where you would use research skills in an office environment; or you may want to be involved in planning events and activities to fundraise for a cause. Volunteering in places like charity shops could also give you experience of customer service.

What should you look for?

As well as thinking about how volunteering would benefit you, it is good to consider which organisations might support your goals. The culture of an organisation is important, and you should be receiving a worthwhile experience for your time and skills.

There are a number of organisations that help organise volunteering opportunities. It is worth looking at the following:

Do-it is a great starting point for looking at volunteering options. It lists a wide range of volunteer options, including organisations looking for volunteers: www.do-it.org.

Volunteering Matters helps people find suitable volunteering opportunities through local partnerships and organisations. They have specific support for disabled people too: www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk/pillars/disabled-people.

Leonard Cheshire – Can Do is a scheme for ten to thirty-five year olds to volunteer in their community. They provide training and cover travel expenses. The scheme is run in numerous locations: www.leonardcheshire.org/support-and-information/life-and-work-skills-development/can-do.

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“The culture of an organisation is important, and you should be receiving a worthwhile experience for your time and skills.”

Vinspired is a youth charity that works to get young people aged between sixteen and twenty-five involved in volunteering. They also offer home-based options which can be more flexible and suitable for some people: www.vinspired.com.

A local volunteer centre can also often discuss your volunteering needs with you. You can find where there is one close to you here: www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre?view=map.

Some organisations offer **supported volunteering**. These tend to be local schemes rather than national. It’s worth checking with your local authority or Jobcentre Plus for more information about these schemes.

Many charity organisations rely on volunteers to be able to provide services or fundraising. You could contact a local charity whose cause you are interested in to check for volunteering opportunities, or check the charity’s website online.

If you are interested in volunteering for Sense, you can find out more by emailing volunteer@sense.org.uk, or by writing to:

Sense Volunteering
101 Pentonville Road
Kings Cross
London N1 9LG

What should you be aware of when applying to volunteer?

Volunteering should not affect your benefits if you are receiving any, and there is no limit to the number of hours you can volunteer.

However, if you are receiving benefits, you should discuss any volunteering with your local Jobcentre Plus. While volunteering shouldn't affect your benefits, your local Jobcentre may still ask you instead of require you to fulfil some requirements to receive your benefits, such as spending a certain number of hours job searching, which you would have to fit around your volunteering.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations offers further information on volunteering and benefits here: www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits.

You should also be aware that, unlike in employment where you can receive support through the Access to Work scheme (see page 12) and the reasonable adjustments requirement under the Equality Act 2010 (see page 5), there is no legal obligation for employers to make adjustments or provide support if you volunteer with them.

This doesn't mean employers will be unwilling to make reasonable adjustments for you to volunteer. But it is something to bear in mind when you are looking for opportunities, and something you should discuss with the organisation you want to volunteer for.

Other opportunities

Aside from employment and volunteering, there are a number of different ways to participate in your local community, have new experiences, and develop new skills.

Voluntary organisations and charities may run programmes in your area where you can get involved in a range of activities. For example, Sense's Arts and Wellbeing programmes give people who are deafblind or sensory impaired the chance to get involved in swimming sessions, yoga, and other activities.

Similar opportunities may be available in your area from charity, voluntary, or government programmes. It is worth checking with your local authority and local organisations about what is available in your area.

If you are interested in finding out what local opportunities may be available to you from Sense, please contact our Information and Advice Team.

By post:

Sense – Information and Advice Team
101 Pentonville Road
Kings Cross
London N1 9LG

Tel: 0300 330 9256 or 020 7520 0972

Textphone: 0300 330 9256 or
020 7520 0972

Email: info@sense.org.uk

You can also contact us through a sign language interpreter – more information on this here: www.sense.org.uk/content/contact-us#information.

Useful resources: Example 1 of a CV that gives your education and job history

Name

Address

Email and Telephone

Personal profile

This is optional but if you do include it, it should provide a short summary of your skills and interests. For example: I am a hardworking and motivated person with an interest in research. I want to build on my work experience in X to improve my analytical skills in a flexible and exciting environment. I am keen to take on a role which gives me responsibility for analysing research for a marketing company.

Education

2014-2017 University of Studying BSc Research Achieved 2:1
X

Work Experience

Position: Intern for Research UK; September to December 2016

Key achievements: [use 'action' words to describe what you have done e.g. managed, analysed, organised, coordinated, participated in, etc.]

- Managed large data sets
- Completed analysis for education project
- Coordinated external stakeholders

Position: Volunteer at Citizens Advice Bureau; March 2015 to September 2016

Key achievements:

- Documented and recorded case study notes
 - Organised and sent out relevant material to support clients' needs
- X

Other achievements and interests

- I regularly participate in a local theatre group
- X

Useful resources: Example 2 of a CV that gives your education and job history

Name

Address

Email and Telephone

Personal profile

This is optional but if you do include it, it should provide a short summary of your skills and interests. For example: I am a hardworking and motivated person with an interest in care and supporting others. I want to gain skills in an exciting and new environment. I am keen to take on a role in a hospital ward working with patients.

Education

2014-2017 College Studied hospitality Included work placement

X

X

Work Experience

Position: Work placement at Main Hospital; September to December 2016

Key achievements: [use 'action' words to describe what you have done e.g. managed, organised, coordinated, participated in, etc.]

- Supported care needs on the ward, working with patients
- Greeted patients and visitors, and signposted them to the right place
- Managed and updated administrative records

Position: Volunteer at Sense Charity Shop; March 2015 to September 2016

Key achievements:

- Welcomed and greeted customers
- Organised items on the shop floor and kept displays neat and tidy

X

Other achievements and interests

- I regularly participate in a local theatre group

X

Useful resources: Example 1 of a skills-based CV

Name

Address

Email and Telephone

Personal profile

This is optional but if you do include it should provide a short summary of your skills and interests. For example: I am a hardworking and motivated person with an interest in research. I want to build on my work experience in X improve my analytical skills in a flexible and exciting environment. I am keen to take on a role which gives me responsibility for analysing research for a marketing company.

Key skills

Research and analytical [use 'action' words to describe what you have done e.g. managed, analysed, organised, coordinated, participated in, etc.]

- Analysed large data sets for a data report on education
 - Constructed quantitative surveys and organised focus groups for projects
- X
- X

Communication

- Presented research findings to various stakeholders
 - Coordinated different external stakeholders to collect research
- X
- X

Team work

- Organised and chaired team meetings
 - Collaborated with relevant colleagues across teams for research projects
- X
- X

Organisational skills

- Completed administrative tasks for the research team
- Managed and monitored invite lists and attendance for research event

X

X

Time management

- Experienced in contributing to different projects simultaneously
- Organised and managed my own workload as an intern

X

X

Education

2014/17 University of Studying BSc Research Achieved 2:1

X

X

Work Experience

Position: Intern for Research UK; September to December 2016

Key achievements:

- Managed large data sets
- Completed analysis for education project
- Organised external stakeholders

X

Position: Volunteer at Citizens Advice Bureau; March 2015 to September 2016

Key achievements:

- Documented and recorded case study notes
- Organised and sent out relevant material to support clients' needs

X

X

Other achievements and interests

- I regularly participate in a local theatre group

X

X

X

Useful resources: Example 2 of a skills-based CV

Name

Address

Email and Telephone

Personal profile

This is optional but if you do include it should provide a short summary of your skills and interests. For example: I am a hardworking and motivated person with an interest in care and supporting others. I want to gain skills in an exciting and new environment. I am keen to take on a role in a hospital ward working with patients.

Key skills

Organisation [use 'action' words to describe what you have done e.g. managed, organised, coordinated, participated in, etc.]

- Organised administrative records at Main Hospital
- Managed and monitored donations at Sense Charity Shop
- X
- X

Time management

- Updated administrative records on time at Main Hospital
- X
- X

Team work

- Supported team members with patient care on the ward at Main Hospital
- Collaborated with other shop assistants to support customers at Sense Charity Shop
- X
- X

Communication

- Welcomed and greeted customers at Sense Charity Shop
 - Provided individual support to patients at Main Hospital, checking they were happy
- X
X

Support and Care

- Fed patients at Main Hospital
 - Supported colleagues to carry out care needs at Main Hospital
- X
X

Education

2014-2017 College Studied hospitality Included work placement

X
X

Work Experience

Position: Work placement at Main Hospital; September to December 2016

Key achievements:

[use 'action' words to describe what you have done e.g. managed, organised, coordinated, participated in, etc.]

- Supported care needs on the ward, working with patients
- Greeted patients and visitors, and signposted them to the right place
- Managed and updated administrative records

Position: Volunteer at Sense Charity Shop; March 2015 to September 2016

Key achievements:

- Welcomed and greeted customers
- Organised items on the shop floor and kept displays neat and tidy

X
X

Other achievements and interests

- I regularly participate in a local theatre group

X



sense

connecting sight, sound and life

About Sense

Sense is a national charity that supports and campaigns for children and adults who have sensory impairments and complex needs. We provide tailored support, advice and information to individuals, their families, carers and the professionals who work with them.

We believe that each person has the right to choose the support and lifestyle that is right for them; one that takes into account their long-term hopes and aspirations.

Our specialist services enable each individual to live as independently as possible, offering a range of housing, educational and leisure opportunities.

Sense

101 Pentonville Road
London
N1 9LG

Tel: 0300 330 9256 (voice)

Text: 0300 330 9256

Fax: 0300 330 9251

Email: info@sense.org.uk

Website: www.sense.org.uk

Registered charity number 289868