



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Workplace adjustments tipsheet for executives and people managers

Simple, actionable tips for managers to support their team members with workplace adjustments.

You should use this tipsheet with your organisation's workplace adjustment policy and related legislation. Check your organisation's intranet, Diversity and Inclusion team or People and Culture team for help.

Read [workplace adjustments advice for public sector organisations](#) for definitions of workplace adjustments, disability and carers. Our [workplace adjustments guide for executives and people managers](#) has a step-by-step explanation to the workplace adjustment process with case studies and conversation prompts.

You're probably already making adjustments

It's likely that you've already made changes to help your employees without disability work better. These changes help remove barriers to their work even if they're not called workplace adjustments. Those conversations were likely routine, straightforward and non-intrusive.

Adjustment conversations for employees with disability and others who might require an adjustment, such as a carer of a person with disability, should be similar. Here are some examples.

Work arrangements

Many employees request flexible working arrangements. They may adjust their work hours around childcare or school pick-up times.

Equipment, environment and facilities

Standing and adjustable desks are popular equipment requests, often for employee preference or wellbeing. They've become so widely used that many workplaces provide them as standard equipment for all employees.

Work-related communication

Many interviews now happen online, and interviewers have changed their practices to account for this. It is common practice to send the questions in writing in the chat while verbally asking them. This simple adjustment helps all candidates have equitable access to the interview process.

These changes can make your employees happier and more effective at work. Keep this in mind for your next adjustment conversation with an employee with disability. Many adjustments are simply inclusive practices and you're likely already doing them.

Preparing for adjustment conversations

Start early

Start the conversation early by asking all employees at the beginning of their employment if there are any adjustments that can help them. Ask during recruitment, onboarding and then in your regular one-on-one conversations.

Ask them if they have filled out the [workplace adjustment and arrangement passport](#) so that you can refer to their history of workplace adjustments and see what has worked well for them in the past.

Make your workplace a safe space

Some people with disability may need time to build trust before sharing their needs.

Build a safe space by keeping conversations private, being an active listener and being open to change. Invite employees to bring a [trusted person to support them through the adjustment process](#) if needed.

Keep learning so that you can support your employee

Direct managers usually serve as the employee's key supporter at work.

Equip yourself with knowledge about disability, departmental resources, and peer networks. This will help your employees thrive. Reach out to your Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) team for help. You can also find educational resources on disability on your intranet.

Having successful workplace adjustments discussions

Lead with inclusivity

A manager may need to adjust their own work processes or assist with implementation. Confident leaders approach adapting their own processes with flexibility and understanding that these changes create the right environment for their team to succeed. Talking with every team member about how they work their best creates a more inclusive team.

Focus on the adjustment and its impact

Your discussion should focus on the supports that reduce the barriers to work rather than the individual's personal information. You do not need to know how someone experiences their disability to remove barriers.

Be open minded

What works for one person might not work for others. You might need several tweaks or some creative thinking to find the right changes. These may change from time to time

too.

Provide reassurance

Many employees with disability fear discrimination and negative reactions. Often, the workplace is just one of several complex systems they need to navigate for support. Your encouragement can make the difference in an employee being confident and empowered to be themselves.

Continuing your support

Disability is dynamic

Each person has their own experience of their disability. Their needs and ability can change a lot, even daily. Maintaining ongoing discussions with your employee about their adjustments will help make sure their changing needs are met.

Practice makes perfect

The more you talk with your team, the easier it becomes and the more confident you will feel. It's okay to not know everything straightaway, as long as you are trying. With time and practice, you'll start finding solutions and identifying adjustments with ease.

Managing resistance

This can be difficult to navigate as a manager. Try to understand why there is resistance so you can offer solutions and new ideas. If you feel like you need support, there are also external options.

Know the legal requirements

Confidentiality

By law, you must not share information from the adjustment process unless you have the express permission of your employee.

This means you cannot talk with other team members about your employee's

adjustments. You also cannot share this information with your People and Culture team without first de-identifying your employee.

In most cases, asking for proof of disability is not appropriate

This is medical information. An employee only needs to share this in certain situations authorised by law. Asking for this information from a person with disability, when it's not required or when you wouldn't ask the same of other employees, can be seen as discriminatory or unfair.

Only request this information when there is a genuine requirement and always follow the correct processes set out in legislation.

Flexible work arrangements

The [Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2024](#) at clause 8 sets out that there are several mechanisms to request flexible work, however requests must be made in writing. For people with a disability a flexible work arrangement may be a type of reasonable adjustment.

All approved flexible work requests should always be documented within a reasonable adjustments passport as an adjustment, however the process by which flexible work is considered should align with the [Flexible Working Arrangements – Specific Circumstances Common Policy](#) and the [VPS Flexible Work Policy](#). Your employer may have a particular process or policy in place to give effect to this.

Positive duty

Organisations must proactively eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, and victimisation. This includes protecting people with disability as much as possible. As a manager, you have a responsibility to act to prevent these behaviours, even if no one has made a complaint.