

Hiring and Working With Deafblind Colleagues

**An
Employer
Guide**

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Why employers should hire deafblind talent

Hiring and Working With Deafblind Colleagues: An Employer Guide has been developed to provide practical guidance to employers on creating inclusive and accessible workplaces for individuals with dual sensory loss, so that they can reap the benefits of having such individuals within their teams. It supports organisations to recruit, support, and retain deafblind employees with confidence and understanding, to the great benefit of all concerned.

Employing a deafblind person is not only a commitment to inclusion, but also a sound business decision. Deafblind individuals bring valuable skills, experiences, and perspectives that can enhance workplace performance and culture. Many develop strong problem-solving abilities, adaptability, and resilience through navigating a world that is not always designed with accessibility in mind—qualities that translate into focus, creativity, and determination in the workplace.

It also highlights the role of deafblind awareness training in helping employers and teams build confidence, improve communication, and foster a more inclusive working environment. Collectively, these elements support employers to move beyond compliance towards best practice, creating workplaces where deafblind employees can contribute fully, work independently, and thrive.

Ultimately, employing a deafblind person is about recognising ability, not limitation, and ensuring that talented individuals are given the opportunity to succeed

Deafblindness: a little explanation

The word “deafblind” is not universally understood. It refers to a person who has a combination of sight and hearing loss, although there is a great spectrum within this description and each individual will be unique.

They may have a more significant loss of either their vision or hearing, and they may have previously had either single sensory loss, or no sensory loss at all. This means there are a number of different ways deafblind people communicate. If they have a cochlear implant, use hearing aids or have less acute hearing loss, this may include clear speech. Others may have different preferred communication methods.

Each person will have distinct talents, experience, challenges and solutions that they need to manage, just like all your colleagues without sensory loss.

Benefits of employing deafblind staff

Employing deafblind individuals brings unique advantages to the workplace:

- **Problem-solving and flexible thinking:** Deafblind employees often develop innovative solutions to overcome challenges, a highly valued skill in today's workplace
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Inclusive workplaces benefit from a broader range of perspectives, enhancing team performance, creativity, and resilience
- **Motivation and engagement:** Employees supported appropriately demonstrate commitment, reliability, and adaptability

Employing deafblind individuals is not just inclusive - it strengthens teams and contributes to organisational success.

Case Study: Thomas Pocklington Trust

Creating an inclusive workplace for individuals with sensory loss requires more than policy - it demands understanding, adaptability, and commitment. In this case study, Thomas Pocklington Trust shares how they champion accessibility and provide meaningful support to ensure their employees can succeed and feel valued.

“Thomas Pocklington Trust employs over 60 blind and partially sighted staff, many of whom also have additional disabilities and health conditions, including hearing loss, neurodiversity, and mental health conditions. The organisation values the unique contribution each individual brings and is committed to creating an inclusive workplace where everyone can thrive.

A range of practical adjustments has been implemented to support accessibility and productivity. These include reducing visual clutter in office spaces, controlling lighting to minimise glare, using high-contrast items such as coloured glassware for easier identification, and ensuring meeting notes are shared in advance in accessible formats. These are low-cost or no-cost adjustments and have been easy to implement.

Alongside these adjustments, a strong, inclusive culture has been developed where employees feel supported both in their work and in wider social activities.

This approach is reflected in the organisation’s onboarding and recruitment processes. For example,



“Mark” (a composite case study of recent employees) joined Thomas Pocklington Trust in late 2025. He reported a highly positive interview experience, where reasonable adjustments were made such as clear introductions, support from a note-taker, and accessible formats for pre-interview tasks using assistive technology.

As part of his onboarding, Mark was provided with an enabler form to identify any workplace adjustments required. This included support relating to his sensory loss, such as assistive technology (ZoomText Fusion), travel support through Access to Work, and consideration of communication needs in meetings and events.

Mark highlighted that while he can follow conversation in quiet environments, he benefits from structured communication in meetings. He also noted that travel and navigation can be challenging due to his vision loss, and that support in these areas enables him to perform effectively in his role.

We have been happy to support Mark in his application to Access to Work and we look forward to enjoying the benefits of his long-term contribution to our team.”

Employee Case Study: 'Get Set Progress' intern from Thomas Pocklington Trust

Jeff is Head of Employment at Thomas Pocklington Trust. This is his story, outlining how a supportive employer has given him the platform to flourish in his role.

"My experience working with Thomas Pocklington Trust has been extremely positive. From the moment I attended my interview at the TPT hub, I noticed a welcoming and supportive environment that felt different from other organisations, and it gave me confidence that this was somewhere I could succeed.

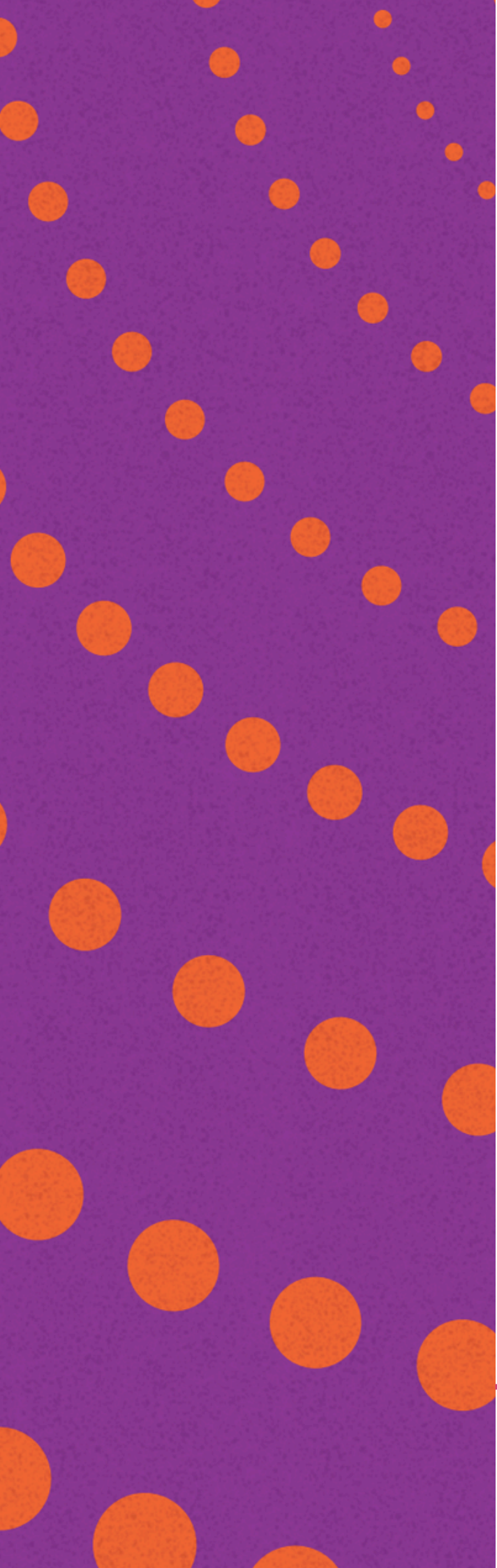
Since starting my role, I have felt included and supported from day one. This is particularly important for me as someone with sight loss, as the right environment and understanding can make a significant difference to how effectively I can work. The team has shown patience, respect, and a willingness to understand my needs, which has helped me feel comfortable and confident in my role.

As part of my employment, I applied for support through the Access to Work scheme. This is a government programme that helps people with

disabilities or health conditions by providing practical support so they can do their jobs effectively. With guidance from TPT, I was able to apply for equipment and software that helps me manage my sight loss at work.

Through this support, I now use assistive software called ZoomText Fusion. This software enlarges text on the screen and can also read information aloud, which is particularly helpful when I find it difficult to read due to my vision. I was also provided with a larger monitor with eye-care features, which makes text clearer and reduces strain. In addition, I have a high-visibility keyboard with white keys, making it easier for me to see and type accurately, as well as an ergonomic mouse to reduce discomfort in my wrist.

"These adjustments are essential rather than optional; they allow me to perform my role effectively and to the same standard as my colleagues."



Without them, I would find it much more difficult to carry out my duties to the best of my ability.

The training I have received has been well-paced and delivered without unnecessary pressure, which has been especially beneficial while adapting to new systems alongside using assistive technology. I have also found that no question is ever considered too small, and colleagues are always willing to help, which has supported my learning and confidence.

I particularly value the open communication within the team and the encouragement to share ideas. This has helped me feel that my contributions are valued and that I am a meaningful part of the organisation.

Overall, having the right support and understanding in place has enabled me to work without unnecessary anxiety and to focus on performing well in my role. I look forward to continuing my development and making a positive contribution to the team and the wider organisation.”



Disclosure of disability

Disability disclosure is a personal decision. Employers should:

- Be aware that applicants may choose not to disclose a disability early due to privacy, previous experiences, or concern about bias
- Not react negatively if a disability is disclosed later in the recruitment process
- Foster an inclusive and open culture, which encourages disclosure when appropriate and ensures fair treatment for all employees

Reasonable adjustments

Employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities, including individuals with dual sensory loss. While Access to Work can provide funding for specialised support such as assistive technology or communication assistance, many workplace adjustments are simple, low-cost, and should be implemented directly by the employer.

These adjustments help remove barriers and ensure employees can work effectively and comfortably.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Providing written or accessible versions of verbal information
- Allowing additional time for meetings or tasks where communication support may be required
- Ensuring meeting rooms are well lit and visually accessible
- Offering flexible working arrangements where appropriate
- Providing clear and accessible communication methods within teams
- Maintaining good management of any potential hazards in the workplace

Reasonable adjustments should always be considered on an individual basis and reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet the employee's needs.





Accessibility considerations in documents

Images:

You should provide a text description when including images or diagrams in documentation, for example:

- “Deafblind employee using assistive technology at a computer workstation”
- “Flowchart showing Access to Work process: application → assessment → support plan → workplace adjustments → review”

This ensures all information is accessible to people with visual impairments.

Text:

Documents should be available in different formats (such as large print sizes) as needed. Size 14 is recommended as a minimum for legibility in inclusive documents, but larger sizes or different formats may be needed.

General tips for creating an accessible workplace

Creating an inclusive environment benefits all employees, not just those with disabilities. Employers can improve accessibility by:

- **Communicating clearly:** Provide information in accessible formats such as written summaries or digital documents compatible with assistive technology

- **Improving meeting accessibility:** Circulate agendas in advance and allow additional time for communication support where needed

- **Ensuring good lighting:** Well-lit spaces support employees with sight loss

- **Reducing background noise where possible:** This can improve communication for employees with hearing loss

- **Promoting awareness:** Encourage staff training and awareness around sensory loss and inclusive communication

- **Encouraging open dialogue:** Create a culture where employees feel comfortable discussing adjustments or support needs

Small changes can make a significant difference in enabling deafblind employees to work confidently and contribute fully in the workplace.



Employee case study: William Ogden

William is currently employed as a Student Support Manager within a large and respected college. These are his observations regarding his own experience of deafblindness in the workplace:

“As someone living with both deafness and partial sight loss, I have found that the biggest barriers in employment are not my disabilities themselves, but assumptions and lack of awareness. True inclusion requires genuine commitment and practical support, not just policies or statements.

With the right support in place, including assistive technology and communication assistance, I am able to contribute fully, work independently, and progress professionally...



...Employers who take the time to understand and adapt the workplace make a meaningful difference, not just for me, but for the wider team."

Access to Work

What is Access to Work?

Access to Work (AtW) is a government-funded scheme, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), designed to support people with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or mental health conditions in the workplace.

Access to Work enables disabled employees to participate fully in the workplace. Employers who support their staff through AtW:

- Promote inclusion and equality
- Strengthen teams with motivated, resilient, and innovative employees
- Ensure legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 are met

Creating an accessible and supportive workplace helps employees thrive, contribute, and feel valued.

AtW offers:

- Financial support for workplace adaptations or equipment
- Practical support such as communication assistance or travel support

- Guidance and assessments to ensure safe, effective, and independent working

Who is eligible?

AtW support applies to:

- Employees with a disability, health condition, or long-term condition
- Individuals about to start a job, starting a work trial, or self-employed (and registered with HMRC)
- Any paid role: part-time or full-time, permanent or temporary

Eligibility typically requires the condition to affect work and be likely to last 12 months or more. Support is also available for disabled individuals needing assistance during job interviews.

Types of support available through AtW

1. Communication Support

- Deafblind communicator guides
- British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters

- Lipspeakers, speech-to-text reporters, or note-takers
- Support for meetings, training, interviews, and day-to-day workplace communication

2. Assistive Technology and Adaptations

- Screen-reading software, Braille displays, magnification tools
- Adapted telephones, visual or vibrating alert systems

3. Travel Support

- Assistance with travel costs if public transport is inaccessible due to dual sensory loss

4. Funding

- Usually covers 100% of approved costs
- Sometimes shared with employers, depending on size and type of support
- Goes beyond an employer's legal duty to make reasonable adjustments

How support is assessed

A specialist assessor will:

- Discuss the individual's role, tasks, and workplace challenges
- Identify necessary adjustments, equipment, or communication support
- Consult the employer if required
- Produce a personalised support plan tailored to the employee's needs

The aim is to ensure the employee can work safely, independently, and confidently.



Final note

How can Deafblind UK support you to employ deafblind people successfully?

Deafblind UK is committed to supporting employers to build inclusive, accessible workplaces where deafblind employees can succeed.

We offer practical guidance, specialist advice, and tailored support to help you confidently recruit, employ, and retain deafblind individuals. This includes advice and support with workplace adjustments, communication strategies, deafblind awareness training, and engaging with schemes such as Access to Work.

Our aim is to work in partnership with employers to remove barriers, build understanding, and ensure that deafblind employees are able to contribute fully and thrive within your organisation.

For further information or to access our support, please contact Deafblind UK directly (details can be found on the last page of this document).

How we can provide the Deafblind Awareness Training you need

Deafblind Awareness sessions have been created to provide essential training on communicating with and supporting people with dual sensory loss. These sessions may cover, amongst other things, Deafblind Manual finger-spelling, guiding techniques, and understanding the impact of acquired or congenital deafblindness. They are designed to improve accessibility, inclusivity and understanding in professional and social settings.

Training can be delivered through virtual sessions and tailored to organisational needs.



If we can do anything to help you to gain the benefits of employing a deafblind person, please get in touch! We look forward to hearing from you.

For further advice, please contact:

Lawrencia Nelson
Employability Officer at Deafblind UK

Lawrencia.Nelson@deafblind.org.uk

Or contact the Deafblind UK Helpline

Call: 0800 132 320

Text: 07903 572 885

Email: info@deafblind.org.uk

Text relay: 18001 then 0800 132 320

BSL video relay: deafblind.org.uk/bsl