

Reasonable Adjustments Without a Diagnosis: Understanding Your Rights Under the Equality Act 2010

When children, young people, or adults face barriers to learning or work, a question we are often asked is:
"Do I need a diagnosis before I can receive support?"

The simple answer is no.



Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act (2010), a confirmed medical diagnosis is not required in order to access support.

What matters most is the extent to which a person's difficulties impact their daily life. If those challenges create substantial barriers to learning, studying, or working- schools, colleges, universities, and employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce those barriers.

What are Reasonable Adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are practical steps designed to remove barriers and ensure that individuals are not placed at a disadvantage compared to their peers. Their purpose is to allow people to participate on an equal basis with others, whether in education, training, or employment.

Whatever the context, these adjustments should always be proportionate, practical, and effective. Importantly, they are not about giving someone an "unfair advantage", they are about creating a level playing field. The law recognises that the focus should be on meeting an individual's needs and reducing barriers to participation, rather than waiting for a formal diagnosis or medical confirmation

Types of adjustments that can be made

Education

- Extra processing time in lessons and assessments
- Written instructions alongside verbal explanations
- Access to movement breaks or a quiet space
- Use of assistive technology (e.g. laptops or reading software)
- Differentiated tasks to suit individual learning needs
- Recording of lectures or access to slides in advance at college or university
- Flexible deadlines or alternative coursework formats



Workplace

- Flexible working hours or hybrid/remote options
- Adjusted targets to reflect disability-related challenges
- Clear, written instructions alongside verbal communication
- Adaptive technology (e.g., screen readers, speech-to-text tools)
- A modified workspace (e.g., quieter location, ergonomic furniture)
- Access to a mentor or workplace buddy for additional support
- Regular check-ins to review workload and wellbeing



Key message:

You don't need to wait for a diagnosis to access support. If challenges are having a substantial impact on learning, studying, or working, the Equality Act 2010 offers protection. This means schools, universities, and employers have a legal duty to put reasonable adjustments in place, ensuring that individuals are not disadvantaged and can thrive.

An educational psychology assessment can highlight a child or young person's strengths, identify areas where additional support may be needed, and provide tailored recommendations for reasonable adjustments. Our highly qualified team delivers assessments that offer a comprehensive understanding of individual needs, guiding effective strategies and ensuring the right support is in place. Get in touch today to start the conversation.

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