Autism and Aspergers

People with autism see, hear and feel the world differently to people without autism. Common difficulties can be with learning, social interaction, the ability to process instructions, and other effects such as understanding sarcasm and jokes, repetitive behaviour and routines. Autism spectrum disorder can also be known as Asperger syndrome. Those with these conditions are more than capable of handling a job and show focus and commitment that makes them an asset in the workplace. Despite this, the proportion of people with Autism in employment is relatively low, and those who do have jobs may encounter difficulties due to the lack of understanding of their colleagues and employers.

It is important that your employer learns the real effects your Autism has on you and your abilities. Once ascertaining this through a specialist assessment your employer should implement any recommendations or adjustments to try to offer support to you to enable you to perform in your role.

Adjustments might include:

• Giving clear instructions to reduce anxiety
• Providing timetables or written instructions for tasks required
  • Giving regular, sensitive feedback
• Supporting you in your role e.g. by a thorough induction process, assigning a mentor or buddy
  • Allowing flexible working
• Using desk partitions and other equipment to reduce sensory issues such as noise and lighting
• Providing awareness training for other employees so that they understand the condition.
Autism and Aspergers

Employers can get help and advice from the government's Access to Work scheme through the Job Centre Plus. They should also consult thoroughly with you to fully understand what your condition involves and what they can do to help. For more information Aspergers, visit the Asperger Foundation website.

Making a claim

If your employer does not consult with you, carry out the necessary checks and investigations and make any reasonable adjustments required, your work may suffer. In some circumstances you may find that you are dismissed on the basis that you are unable to carry out the role.

If this is the case then you may be entitled to claim against your employer for disability discrimination.

There is no minimum length of employment required to bring a claim at the Employment Tribunal, but it is important to lodge your claim with ACAS within 3 months of the act of discrimination occurring. It is therefore essential that you take legal advice on your situation at an early stage and as soon as possible.

Contact Ashley Hunt & Carrie-Ann Randall on 01858 445 480 or Vaishali Thakerar & Alex Reid on 0116 212 1000 if you have been discriminated against because of autism or Asperger’s.